



Literacy Glossary of Terms

Updated January 2010

Term	Definition	Example	Context
<p>adjective</p>	<p>A word that describes someone or something. This includes comparatives and superlatives.</p>	<p>big helpful bigger/biggest</p>	<p>He put the apples in the <u>big</u> basket. The old lady was assisted by the <u>helpful</u> girl.</p>
<p>adverb</p>	<p>Adds to the meaning of a verb, an adjective, another adverb or a whole sentence.</p> <p>There are 4 types of adverb. They describe how, when, where and how often</p>	<p>Adverb+verb <u>thoroughly enjoyed</u> Adverb+adjective <u>quietly confident</u> Adverb+adverb <u>extremely slowly</u> Adverb+sentence <u>really, he should know better!</u> How - <u>slowly, happily</u> Where - <u>outside, upstairs</u> When - <u>yesterday</u> How often - <u>regularly</u></p>	<p>The bull grazed <u>noisily</u> in the field.</p> <p>The small boy <u>quickly</u> fixed the puncture on his bike.</p>
<p>adverbials / adverbial phrase <i>see also: phrase,</i></p>	<p>A group of words that function in the same way as a single adverb.</p>	<p>quietly a few days ago</p>	<p>The children walked <u>quietly</u>.</p> <p>They left <u>a few days ago</u>.</p>

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<p><i>expanded noun phrase, verb phrase</i></p>		<p>when we went out</p>	<p><u>When we went out</u> it was raining.</p>
<p>apostrophe</p>	<p>An apostrophe is a punctuation mark used to indicate either omitted letters or possession.</p>	<p>Omitted letters when a verb is contracted or shortened:</p> <p>I'm (I am) They've (They have) It's (It is/It has) Isn't (Is not)</p> <p>Possession:</p> <p>The cat's tail (one cat) The boys' coats (many boys) The parents' car The children's toys (children is a plural)</p>	<p>NB: The dog is eating one of <u>its</u> (apostrophe not used for possession) bones. <u>It's</u> (apostrophe used for omission - It is) the biggest dog <u>I've</u> seen.</p>
<p>brackets parenthesis</p>	<p>A parenthesis is a word or phrase inserted into a sentence to explain or elaborate. It may be placed in brackets or between dashes or commas.</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>Sam and Emma (<u>his oldest children</u>) are coming to visit him next weekend. The clown <u>- a colourful character -</u> laughed out loud. Sarah is, <u>I believe</u>, our best student.</p>

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<p>clause</p> <p>(+ subordinate and main)</p> <p>see also complex sentence</p>	<p>A clause is a group of words that expresses an event or a situation. It contains a noun (subject) and a verb.</p>	<p>NB a clause differs from a phrase</p> <p>Phrase: a big dog</p> <p>Clause: <u>a big dog chased me</u></p> <p>Adverbial clause: It was raining <u>when we went out.</u></p> <p>Noun clause: <u>What you said</u> was not true.</p>	<p>The dog chased the ball <u>when the boy (subject) threw (verb) it.</u></p>
<p>colon</p>	<p>A colon is a mark used to introduce a list or a following example. It may be used before a second clause that expands or illustrates the first.</p>	<p>▪</p> <p>▪</p>	<p>Animals: cat, dog, mouse</p> <p>He was very cold: the temperature was below zero.</p>
<p>comma</p>	<p>A punctuation mark used to help the reader by separating parts of a sentence. A comma is either used:</p> <p>to separate items in a list;</p> <p>to mark off extra information;</p>	<p>,</p>	<p>I wore a coat, scarf, hat and gloves.</p> <p>The teacher, Mrs Jones, wore a coat.</p> <p>Although it was cold, no-one was wearing a coat.</p>

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	<p>after a subordinate clause which begins a sentence; with many connecting adverbs.</p>		<p>Anyway, in the end I decided not to have a go.</p>
<p>comma splice</p>	<p>When the writer is experimenting with clauses within sentences but has not yet secured control of sentence demarcation.</p> <p>When commas are inappropriately used to punctuate clauses or phrases in complex sentences, where a full stop or connective is needed.</p>	<p>Running down the road, Harry could not see where he was_ he tripped over the pavement.</p> <p><i>Should be:</i></p> <p>Running down the road, Harry could not see where he was_ He tripped over the pavement.</p> <p><i>OR:</i></p> <p>Running down the road, Harry could not see where he was <u>so</u> he tripped over the pavement.</p> <p>Jane was crying_ she was afraid.</p> <p><i>Should be:</i> Jane was crying_ She was afraid. <i>OR:</i> Jane was crying <u>because</u> she was afraid.</p>	
<p>complex sentence</p> <p><i>see also: sentence for simple and compound sentences</i></p>	<p>A complex sentence is a sentence with a <u>main clause</u> and at least one <u>subordinate clause</u>.</p>	<p>When I saw what you had done, (subordinate clause) I was sad (main clause).</p> <p>Sam loved to play tennis (main clause), although he wasn't very good at it (subordinate clause).</p>	

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<p>compound word</p>	<p>A word made up of two other words.</p>	<p>rainbow football sometimes</p>	<p>Sometimes you can see a <u>rainbow</u> when there is <u>rainfall</u> and <u>sunshine</u> together.</p>
<p>connective</p> <p><i>see also conjunctions</i></p>	<p>A word or phrase that joins ideas in different parts of a text: clauses, sentences or paragraphs. Connectives can be conjunctions or connective adverbs.</p>	<p>Simple connective: <u>and</u>, Reason: <u>because</u> Additions: <u>also, furthermore</u> Time indicators: <u>meanwhile, later</u> Opposition: <u>but, however, on the other hand</u> Reinforcing: <u>besides, after all</u> Indicating result: <u>so that, therefore, consequently</u> Explaining: <u>For example, in other words</u> Listing: <u>First of all, secondly</u></p>	<p>The boy <u>and</u> girl played together on the sand <u>while</u> the parents sat on the deckchairs.</p> <p>I was angry, <u>but</u> didn't say anything to my friend.</p> <p><u>On the other hand</u>, the dog was quite friendly with children.</p>

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<p>conjunction</p> <p><i>see also connective</i></p>	<p>A word used to link clauses within a sentence. See Grammar for Writing glossary for co-ordinating/subordinating conjunctions.</p>	<p>and, but, or, if, when, after, although, while</p>	<p>It was raining <u>but</u> it wasn't cold. Do you want to go out <u>or</u> shall we wait a bit longer? We were hungry <u>because</u> we hadn't eaten all day. Although we'd had plenty to eat, we were still hungry.</p>
<p>content word (also lexical words)</p>	<p>Subject specific words - normally words in the four word classes of noun, verb, adjective and adverb.</p>	<p>blue toga evaporation</p>	<p>The <u>blue toga was worn</u> by the <u>powerful emperor</u>.</p>
<p>derivational prefix/suffix</p>	<p>Give related words different meanings and /or change the word class</p>	<p>(adjective to adverb) quick - quickly (addition of ly) (Adjective to noun) modern - modernity prince/princess unimportant</p>	
<p>dashes</p>	<p>A dash may be used to replace other punctuation marks (colons, semi-colons, commas) or brackets.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>It was a great day out - everybody enjoyed it. The dog - who barked loudly - ran down the road.</p>

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<p>digraphs</p>	<p>Two letters that together represent a sound (phoneme)</p>	<p>Vowel digraphs: ea, ir, oo, ow, ai Consonant digraphs: ch, th, ss, ll, ff</p>	
<p>expanded noun phrase <i>see also: phrase, adverbial phrase, verb phrase</i></p>	<p>A group of words that function in a sentence like a noun. They expand a single noun giving more information economically.</p>	<p>The <u>demon-like teacher</u> with <u>blood-shot eyes</u> The <u>mysterious woman in black</u> The <u>sporty red car with a sunroof</u></p>	<p>The <u>tall, imposing monument</u> was made from <u>cool, white marble.</u></p>
<p>grammatical function (non lexical words)</p>	<p>The syntactic relationships between words - the job that each word does in a sentence / phrase/ clause. Words within a sentence that perform a function and have little identifiable meaning - normally preposition, determiner, conjunction and pronoun.</p>	<p>e.g. the, a, these</p>	<p><u>He</u> (pronoun) gave <u>me</u> (pronoun) <u>this</u> (determiner) book <u>before</u> (preposition) <u>I</u> (pronoun) went out <u>quickly</u> (adverb) <u>and</u> (conjunction) played.</p>

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homophone	Words which sound the same , but are spelt differently and have different meanings	flour/flower aloud/allowed board/bored new/knew	We are not <u>allowed</u> to shout <u>aloud</u> in the corridor.
inflected words	A change to the ending of a word to indicate tense, number or other grammatical features. Doesn't change word class.	play: playing, plays, played lonely: lonelier, loneliest house, houses	The <u>lonely</u> boy <u>plays</u> on his own. The <u>loneliest</u> boy <u>was playing</u> on his own.
lexical words (also content words)	Words that carry information. They are also known as content words or information words. Normally nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.	Animals' specific names mammal carnivore	<u>Snakes</u> are <u>reptiles</u> which can be <u>venomous</u> . <u>Conductors</u> are <u>materials</u> that allow <u>electricity</u> to flow through them.
morpheme (+ <i>suffix /prefix</i>)	The smallest unit of meaning. A word may contain one or more morphemes. Suffixes and prefixes are morphemes NB a <i>free</i> morpheme stands alone while a <i>bound</i> morpheme needs the rest of the word.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ house ▪ house/keep/er (house and keep are free morphemes ; the suffix 'er' is a bound morpheme) Examples of single morpheme words are: rain, come, run, go, have, school, play, ground, sad, happy, whistle, grow, whisper,	

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<p>nominalisation - for succinctness</p>	<p>Succinct phrasing which conveys key information appropriately for the purpose of a piece of writing.</p> <p>Sentences that have been shortened because words have been removed, but are more effective.</p>	<p>No smoking</p> <p>Bullet-pointed list made up of phrases rather than sentences.</p> <p>Instructional text with simple actions and not adjectives or adverbs.</p>	<p>Often found in non-fiction writing, such as reports, adverts, posters.</p> <p>I saw a pirate who had a long face and a fierce look on his face.</p> <p>> <u>I saw a fierce, long-faced pirate.</u></p>
<p>noun</p> <p><i>see also: expanded noun phrase</i></p>	<p>A word that denotes somebody or something.</p> <p>Proper nouns are the names of people, places or things. A collective noun refers to a group.</p>	<p>Common nouns: person, electricity</p> <p>Abstract nouns: happiness</p> <p>Proper nouns: Birmingham, November</p> <p>Collective nouns: people, games, herd</p>	<p>My younger <u>sister</u> won some <u>money</u> in a <u>competition</u>.</p>
<p>paragraph</p>	<p>A section of a piece of writing. Marks a change of focus, time, place or speaker. Helps writers organise thoughts, readers to follow the story-line.</p>	<p>A new paragraph begins on a new line usually with a gap separating it from the previous paragraph.</p> <p>A new paragraph may also be indented.</p>	

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<p>phrase</p> <p><i>see also: adverbial phrase, expanded noun phrase. verb phrase</i></p>	<p>A group of words that act as one unit to replace a single word.</p>	<p>noun phrase: a big dog adjectival phrase: as old as you adverbial phrases: five minutes ago; in a hurry</p>	<p>They were <u>in a hurry</u> when they left <u>five minutes ago</u>.</p>
<p>prefix</p>	<p>A prefix is a morpheme which is added to the start of a root word</p>	<p><u>Mis</u> - wrong/badly <u>Sub</u> - under <u>Pre</u> - before in time, in front of, superior</p>	<p>I am so <u>mis</u>understood. We walked through the <u>sub</u>way Dinosaurs are <u>pre</u>historic animals.</p>
<p>pronoun</p>	<p>Can replace a noun or noun phrase to make sentences less repetitive.</p> <p>There are several kinds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal: specific person ▪ Possessive: ownership ▪ Interrogative: questions ▪ Relative: links phrases and clauses ▪ Indefinite: refers to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ personal - I/me/you ▪ possessive - mine yours ▪ interrogative - who/whom ▪ relative - which/whoever ▪ indefinite - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>I</u> am happy. ▪ That drink is <u>mine</u>. ▪ Who is the main character? ▪ The owl <u>who</u> was afraid of the dark. ▪ Does <u>anyone</u> know where I put

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	unspecified person ▪ Reflexive - subject of the sentence	another/anyone ▪ reflexive - myself/himself	my glasses? ▪ The runner was very proud of <u>himself</u> when he won the race.
punctuation	The most commonly used punctuation marks in English are: <u>apostrophe</u> , <u>brackets (parenthesis)</u> , <u>colon</u> , <u>comma</u> , <u>dash</u> , <u>ellipsis</u> , <u>exclamation mark</u> , <u>full stop</u> , <u>hyphen</u> , <u>semi-colon</u> , <u>speech marks</u> and <u>question mark</u> .		
sections	When information is grouped together but is not organised into paragraphs.		
semi-colon	A semi-colon can be used to separate two main clauses in a sentence. Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a list if these items consist of longer phrases.	;	I liked the book; it was a pleasure to read. I wanted some ripe, juicy tomatoes; a large can of olive oil; half a pound of unsalted butter; and a jar of black olives.

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<p>sentence</p>	<p>A sentence can be simple, compound or complex.</p>	<p>A simple sentence consists of one clause. A compound sentence has two or more clauses joined by <i>and</i>, <i>but</i> or <i>so</i>. Each clause has equal weight - both main clauses. A complex sentence consists of a main clause which itself consists of one or more subordinate clauses.</p>	<p><u>It was late.</u></p> <p><u>It was late but I wasn't tired.</u></p> <p><u>Although it was late, I wasn't tired.</u></p>
<p>speech marks</p>	<p>In text speech marks (also called inverted commas or quotes) mark the beginning and end of direct speech. Direct speech is the speaker's original words - as in a speech bubble.</p>	<p>' ' " "</p>	<p>Helen said, <u>'I'm going home.'</u> <u>"What do you want?"</u> I asked.</p>
<p>subordinating connective</p>	<p>A connecting word introducing a subordinate clause in a sentence. It</p>	<p>although that because</p>	<p><u>Although</u> I had saved up, (subordinate clause) I still did not have enough money.</p>

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<i>see also: clause, subordination, sentence,</i>	determines the relationship of meaning between the subordinate and main clause.	until before whereas	
subordination <i>see also: clause</i>	The use of main and subordinate clauses within a sentence. A subordinate clause does not make sense on its own.	If you push that button,when you finish painting.	<u>Unless you pack your case</u> , you won't be able to go on holiday. You may have an accident <u>if you do not take care</u> when you cross the road.
suffix	A suffix is a morpheme which is added to the end of a root word.	walk <u>ing</u> help <u>ful</u> comfort <u>able</u>	I was talk <u>ing</u> to Sam. The car crash was accident <u>al</u> . That behaviour is not accept <u>able</u> .
syntax	Syntax is the study of sentence structure: how words interrelate to form sentences / clauses. It is the understanding of how nouns, verbs etc work together.		
tense inflection	The ending of a verb which denotes tense.	<u>ed</u>	he play <u>ed</u> they hurri <u>ed</u>
unstressed syllables	A beat in a word that is not sounded out.	parl <u>i</u> ament libr <u>a</u> ry gover <u>n</u> ment int <u>e</u> resting	

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		diff <u>e</u> rent gen <u>e</u> rally marv <u>e</u> llous lit <u>e</u> racy memor <u>a</u> ble (see Spelling Bank Page 52 for more examples)	
verb phrase/chain <i>see also: phrase, adverbial phrase, expanded noun phrase</i>	Two or more words that express an action or state of being.	are going didn't like has been waiting	I <u>have been standing</u> here for a long time.
vowel digraph <i>see also <u>digraph</u> for consonant digraphs</i>	Where two vowels or one vowel and a consonant work together to make one sound.		ow oe ai or

For further definitions refer to Grammar for Writing glossary.