



# Literacy Glossary of Terms

Updated January 2010

Term	Definition	Example	Context
<p><b>adjective</b></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><b>adverb</b></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><b>adverbials / adverbial phrase</b> <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><b>apostrophe</b></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><b>brackets</b> <b>parenthesis</b></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><b>clause</b></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><b>NB</b> 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><b>colon</b></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><b>comma</b></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><b>comma splice</b></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><b>complex sentence</b></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><b>compound word</b></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><b>connective</b></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><b>conjunction</b></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><b>content word</b> (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><b>derivational prefix/suffix</b></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><b>dashes</b></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><b>digraphs</b></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><b>expanded noun phrase</b> <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><b>grammatical function (non lexical words)</b></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 <b>content words</b> 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 (+ suffix /prefix)	The smallest unit of meaning. A word may contain one or more morphemes. <b>Suffixes</b> and <b>prefixes</b> 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"> <li>▪ house</li> <li>▪ house/keep/er</li> </ul> (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><b>nominalisation - for succinctness</b></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>&gt; <u>I saw a fierce, long-faced pirate.</u></p>
<p><b>noun</b></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><b>Common nouns:</b> person, electricity</p> <p><b>Abstract nouns:</b> happiness</p> <p><b>Proper nouns:</b> Birmingham, November</p> <p><b>Collective nouns:</b> people, games, herd</p>	<p>My younger <u>sister</u> won some <u>money</u> in a <u>competition</u>.</p>
<p><b>paragraph</b></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><b>phrase</b></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: <b>a big dog</b>            adjectival phrase: <b>as old as you</b>            adverbial phrases: <b>five minutes ago; in a hurry</b></p>	<p>They were <u>in a hurry</u> when they left <u>five minutes ago</u>.</p>
<p><b>prefix</b></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><b>pronoun</b></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"> <li>▪ Personal: specific person</li> <li>▪ Possessive: ownership</li> <li>▪ Interrogative: questions</li> <li>▪ Relative: links phrases and clauses</li> <li>▪ Indefinite: refers to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ personal - <b>I/me/you</b></li> <li>▪ possessive - <b>mine yours</b></li> <li>▪ interrogative - <b>who/whom</b></li> <li>▪ relative - <b>which/whoever</b></li> <li>▪ indefinite -</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>I</u> am happy.</li> <li>▪ That drink is <u>mine</u>.</li> <li>▪ <b>Who</b> is the main character?</li> <li>▪ The owl <u>who</u> was afraid of the dark.</li> <li>▪ Does <u>anyone</u> know where I put</li> </ul>

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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 <b>simple sentence</b> consists of one clause.  A <b>compound sentence</b> 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 <b>complex sentence</b> 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>..... or ..... </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	
<b>subordination</b> <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.
<b>suffix</b>	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> .
<b>syntax</b>	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.		
<b>tense inflection</b>	The ending of a verb which denotes tense.	<u>ed</u>	he play <u>ed</u> they hurri <u>ed</u>
<b>unstressed syllables</b>	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)	
<b>verb phrase/chain</b>  <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.
<b>vowel digraph</b>  <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.