A guide to the new national curriculum’s grammatical terms for those of us who weren’t taught grammar at school.

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Many parents were not taught grammar at school and therefore might not be confident with the topic.

The purpose of this guide is to help explain some of the terms, which your son or daughter is expected to know as part of the new national curriculum.

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Words are used to help us talk to each other.

There are lots and lots of words.

They all have:
- a way they are spoken
- a way they are spelled
- one or more meaning

REMEMBER! Words help us talk and communicate.

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Letters and capital letters sound the same when they're spoken...

\[ \text{abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz} \]
\[ \text{ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ} \]

...but they look different.

**USE CAPITALS:**
- at the beginning of sentences
- at the beginning of people's names
- at the beginning of place names
- when using 'I' to talk about ourselves

**REMEMBER!**
Only use capitals when required.

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Punctuation helps us to read sentences.

There are lots of punctuation marks that give us clues about when to pause and how to end sentences.

Don't tell the grown ups, but...

Punctuation marks are really the Punctuation Pals - a group of friendly aliens who help us to communicate.

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A full stop lets a reader know when to stop reading and pause.

A full stop goes at the end of a sentence.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

The man walked across the road.
The dog chased the cat.

The full stop goes here to show that the sentence has finished.

A full stop doesn't just go at the end of a line - check it makes sense.

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Exclamation marks are used to show strong feeling or emotion.

They’re commonly used at the end of a command or to imply shouting.

Exclamation marks show strong emotion.

**For Example**

You're in trouble!

How silly this is!

That's a ridiculous decision!

The exclamation mark adds more feeling.

**Remember!**

Don’t use too many.

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We use question marks to go at the end of sentences that ask questions.

They will replace the full stop.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

Where's my supper?
Who are you?
What's your name?

The question marks go here.

**REMEMBER!**

Questions need a question mark and not a full stop.

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Singular means one.

Plural means more than one.

We can normally change a singular word to a plural word by adding 's' or 'es'.

**For example**
- book becomes books
- cow becomes cows
- bus becomes buses
- potato becomes potatoes

**Remember!** Take care with words that don't become plural in the usual ways.

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To create a simple sentence, we follow simple rules.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

The man sneezed loudly.

We need a capital letter and a full stop.

**AND**

The man sneezed loudly.

It will usually have a subject and a verb.

**REMEMBER!** A sentence should be a full thought.

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A noun is the name of a person, place, thing or idea.

David
Rosie
Andy
London
town
pool
chair
pencil
brick
hope
anger
fear

A sentence will normally contain at least one noun, which will be the subject.

David is running.

Other nouns in a sentence will be called objects.

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Adjectives are describing words.

Adjectives give us more information about nouns.

Don't use too many adjectives in your writing.
A verb is an action, doing or being word.

The same verb can take different forms. This will depend on how many people, or things are doing it and when it happened. A sentence will normally contain at least one verb.

For example:

Harry broke a pencil.

The verb is 'broke' because that's what Harry actually did.

Remember! Verbs let us know what's happening.

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When a verb is affected by when something happens, this is called tense.

Describing something happening now is present tense.

First person singular = I am
Second person singular = You are

Describing something that has already happened is past tense.

First person singular = I was
Second person singular = You were

Make sure you get the right tense in your sentence.

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The progressive form of a verb usually describes things that are happening (or in progress).

The progressive is created by combining the verb 'to be' with the verb's present participle (usually ending in ing).

For example:

John is talking in class.

Because 'is' is present tense, this is an example of the present progressive.

Remember! We can change 'is' to 'was' to create the past progressive.
Adverbs are describing words.

Adverbs tell us when, where, how, in what manner and to what extent a verb is performed.

For example:
The man ran quickly.

Remember! They can also affect adjectives or other adverbs.
NOUN PHRASES

A noun phrase is a group of words with a noun as its head.

We can build a noun phrase by adding words before it:

Cars
Convertible cars
New convertible cars

or after it:

Cars with seats
Cars with leather seats

are lots of fun.
are lots of fun.
are lots of fun.

REMEMBER! Find the noun that affects the verb to find the head.

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A statement is a sentence that gives information and has a subject and a verb.

The subject will usually come first in a statement.

Contains the subject

Bill
The cat
Chairs

Contains the verb

drinks milk.
hates Bill.
are comfortable.

Statements are the most common type of sentence.

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Questions are a type of sentence that ask for information.

There are different types of questions.

Yes/no questions, or closed questions only need a yes or no answer.

Some questions start with who, what, why, when, where, or how and require more information.

Alternative questions need an answer connected to the question.

**REMEMBER!** Statements can often be turned into questions by adding a question mark.

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Exclamations are sentences that show strong feeling.

To be considered an exclamation, the sentence must start with “how” or “what”. It should also contain a verb.

For example:

How beautiful you look today!

What a ridiculous decision you have made here!

Remember! Don't forget your exclamation mark.

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Commands give instructions.

They use the imperative form of verbs.

When using commands, the sentence doesn't always need a subject.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

Clean my shirt.

It is suggested that 'You' would be the subject (You clean my shirt).

**REMEMBER!**

Commands can work well with exclamation marks.
A suffix is a group of letters, placed at the end of a word to alter the meaning or function.

Different suffixes affect words in different ways.

**For example**

child + less = childless

The addition of the suffix 'less' changes the noun to an adjective.

**For example**

banana + s = bananas

The addition of the suffix 's' makes the noun plural.

**Remember!** Suffixes always go at the end.

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Apostrophes have two main uses.

An apostrophe for contraction tells us one or more letters have been replaced by an apostrophe.

For example: I don't care.

An apostrophe for possession tells us that something belongs to something else.

For example: Dave's iPad.

Remember! Don't use apostrophes to show plurals.
Commas can help to separate items in lists.

When separating items in lists, commas are placed between all of the items apart from the last two, which are normally separated by a conjunction.

**For example**

This sandwich has cheese, bacon, tomatoes and bananas.

**Remember!**

Commas have other uses too.
Compound sentences are a multi clause sentence. They are formed when we join two main clauses.

We join the two main clauses with a coordinating conjunction such as 'and', 'but' and 'or'.

FOR EXAMPLE

My friend bought a dog and it bit him.

REMEMBER!

We can often replace a coordinating conjunction with a semicolon.

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A, E, I, O and U are vowels.

Vowels are letters that make a sound without the throat or mouth closing.

All other letters are consonants.

It's important to know the difference so we can use the correct article: 'a' or 'an'.

We would use 'a' if the words begins with a consonant.
  e.g. A cat

We would use 'an' if the word begins with a vowel.
  e.g. an octopus

Beware of the letter h!
Word families are based on common words. They can be related through form, meaning, or both.

We can take nouns or verbs and add prefixes or suffixes to easily create word families. There will be a stem or root word.

For example:

Teachable
Teacher
Teachers
Teach
Teaching
Teachings
Taught

Remember! Teach is the stem or root word.

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A clause is a group of words that contains a verb, or has a verb as its head.

The two main clause types are main and subordinate. A main clause can make sense on its own as it will have a subject and a verb.

We went for a game of tennis.

A subordinate clause always needs more information and needs to be attached to a main clause.

after we had lunch

A subordinate clause can go in different places in a sentence.

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Conjunctions are linking words. There are two types of conjunction.

- **Coordinating conjunctions**, such as 'and', 'but', and 'or'. They link two balanced clauses in a compound sentence.
  
  **Example:** I like tennis and I like squash.

- **Subordinating conjunctions**, such as 'when', 'before', 'after', 'while' and 'because'. They introduce subordinate clauses.
  
  **Example:** when you do that

Conjunctions can connect your ideas.

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A prefix is a group of letters, placed at the start of a word to alter the meaning or function.

Different prefixes affect words in different ways.

For example:

\[ \text{super + market} = \text{supermarket} \]

The addition of the prefix 'super' makes the market bigger.

\[ \text{un + interested} = \text{uninterested} \]

The addition of the prefix 'un' flips the words meaning to mean the opposite.

Remember! Prefixes always go at the beginning.
The perfect form of a verb represents a situation resulting from a past event.

The perfect is created by combining the verb ‘to have’ with the verb’s past participle.

*For example*

John has talked in class.

Because ‘has’ is present tense, this is an example of the present perfect.

*Remember!*

We can change ‘has’ to ‘had’ to create the past perfect.
A preposition is a word that suggests how one part of a clause relates to another part.

Prepositions are words like:

above, below, across, upon, beneath, of, against, into, within, on, like, around

Prepositions normally precede a noun.

For example:

Under the bridge, the man waited for the goats.

Remember!

Prepositional phrases do the same job, but consist of more than one word.
When writing direct speech, we place inverted commas around what has been said.

For example:

"My name is Julie," said the new girl.

Don't forget to place a comma inside the inverted commas.

Remember!

When writing paragraphs of speech, we write opening inverted commas for each new paragraph, but don't write the closing ones until the end.
Articles don’t really have a meaning of their own, but they affect the sentence they are a part of.

There are two types of article.

The definite article
- the

When 'the' is used, it generally indicates the noun is familiar or specific.

The indefinite article
- a or an

When 'a' or 'an' is used it normally gives less emphasis or shows less importance.

REMEMBER!

Articles are determiners.
Adverbials modify verbs. They tell us something about the clause of which they are a part.

They can be single words, phrases, or clauses.

Where?  When?  How?

words  here  usually  quickly
phrases  to work  for a day  by train
clauses  travelling by train  after we had eaten  as he always did

A fronted adverbial is always followed by a comma.
A determiner will normally give more information about a noun.

Common determiners are:

- a/an, the
- this, these
- my, your
- some, many
- articles
demonstratives
possessives
quantifiers

They can determine whether a noun is singular or plural; how definite or specific a noun is, or how many.

**REMEMBER!** Find the noun that affects the verb to find the head.

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Pronouns are words used in place of nouns or noun phrases.

Personal pronouns are the most common type.

For example:

- I - first person singular
- you - second person singular
- he/she - third person singular
- we - first person plural
- you - second person plural
- they - third person plural

Verbs can react differently, depending on the pronoun that has been used.

Remember: Pronouns help to avoid repetition.
Possessive pronouns are used to show ownership.

For example:
mine, yours, his, hers, their, ours, its

"Its" doesn't require a possessive apostrophe.

When possessive words are determiners, they often change form.

For example:
mine becomes my
yours becomes your

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Ambiguity can happen when a word in a sentence has more than one meaning.

We all saw her duck.

The word duck could be a noun (as in the lady's pet duck), or the word could be a verb.

Ambiguity can also happen due to sentence structure.

John bathed his dog wearing blue trousers.

It isn't clear if John is wearing blue trousers whilst washing his dog, or if his dog is wearing blue trousers whilst having a bath.

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Auxiliary verbs are verbs that combine with other verbs to make a complete verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are:
- Be: am, is, are, was, were, being, been
- Have: has, have, had, having
- Do: does, do, did

They help express the tense, voice, or mood of a sentence.

**For example:**

I *am* working.
- used to make the tense continuous

Jim and Sam *have* seen the film.
- used to make the present perfect and past perfect tense

I *do* not like tennis.
- used to form negatives or questions
Modal verbs can reflect the probability of whether or not something is going to happen.

The main modal verbs are can, could, ought, may, must, might, would, will, shall, should

Modal verbs are finite verbs. They have a subject and can stand on their own.

For example:

That animal might be dangerous.

Subject Modal verb

You must.
We use brackets to provide an aside or give extra information in a sentence.

The sentence should always make sense without the extra information.

For example:

The boys (five in all) wanted to play football.

Remember! Make sure full stops go outside the brackets if they are at the end of a sentence.
Cohesion is something a paragraph has when its ideas are clearly linked.

Cohesion can be created through determiners and pronouns referring back to earlier words.

The teacher was looking forward to meeting her new class. She was also nervous.

The pronoun 'she' refers back to the teacher.

Or

My uncle eats four pies a day. Consequently, he's overweight.

The adverb 'consequently' tells us the smell is a result of the smoking.
A relative clause is a subordinate clause that refers back to a noun or noun phrase.

It usually does this by using a relative pronoun. A relative clause can be used with the subject of a sentence.

The lady, who makes a lot of noise, should be quiet.

The relative pronoun 'who' refers back to 'The lady' - the subject of the sentence. The relative clause can also be used with the object of a sentence.

The school banned mobile phones that can access the internet.

Phones are an object of this sentence, but the pronoun 'that' refers to the phones.

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Dashes can show an interruption, or parenthesis in a sentence.

Dashes can be used in pairs or on their own. The interruption will tend to be more aggressive than with commas or brackets.

For example:
The teachers want what's best for us - or so they say.

Remember!
The above dash is an em dash. An en dash can be used to show sequence.
Brackets and dashes can be used for parenthesis, but so can commas. Commas can be less forceful.

Any words inside the parenthesis can be left out and will still leave a meaningful sentence.

The sandwich, made by my mother, was tasty.

The sentence would still be meaningful without the section in between the commas.

Commas are normally the best choice for parenthesis if you want to be more subtle.

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An action within a clause can be expressed in one of two ways: active or passive voice.

The active voice has the subject as the active part.

The mouse ate the cheese.

In this example, the mouse is doing something. It is eating the cheese; the mouse is active.

The passive voice has the subject acted upon.

The cheese was eaten by the mouse.

In this example, the cheese is the subject, but it is passive. The mouse is still doing the eating and takes attention away from the subject.
Synonyms are words that have similar meanings.

- big and large
- talk and speak
- small and tiny

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings.

- fat and thin
- helpful and unhelpful
- decent and indecent

Synonyms aren't always interchangeable, so make sure you understand a word's meaning.

We can often create antonyms by adding prefixes like 'un' and 'in'.
The subject of a sentence will normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.

We would normally expect a subject to go before a verb.

An object will also normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.

We would normally expect an object to go after a verb.

The subject is what the sentence is about. It can affect the form of the verb.

REMEMBER!
An ellipsis is used to show an omission of expected words.

Clever writers can use an ellipsis to create drama and tension. In this instance, we would use three dots.

The man stopped...

In this example, the omission of any text after the statement makes us wonder why the man has stopped. However, we don't always need the dots.

John watched his mother and went over to help.

The omission of the word 'he' before 'went' is an ellipsis, but doesn't require three dots.
A semicolon can be used to join closely connected main clauses.

I really enjoy playing football; it's the best game in the world.

The clauses at either side of the semicolon could be short sentences. Semicolons can therefore sometimes replace conjunctions.

We can also use semicolons in lists where commas are already in use.

The teams playing came from Harrogate, North Yorkshire; Hastings, East Sussex and Ipswich, East Anglia.
A colon will introduce a list or an explanation.

It can be used in place of the following words/phrases:
- Such as...
- Include/including...
- They are...

A colon shouldn't be used if it's not required.

**For example**

The ingredients include: jam, flour and soap.

The example is incorrect. We should use 'include' OR the colon.

**Remember!**

Colons are a rare punctuation mark.
Bullet points are used to highlight important pieces of information.

They will typically follow a colon.

We should use full stops and capital letters if the points form full sentences.

**REMEMBER!**

These suggestions are guidelines and not rules, but be consistent.
Hyphens can be used in compound words, to join prefixes to other words and to show word breaks.

Hyphens can show that words have a combined meaning. This can help us to avoid ambiguity.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

A first-half goal
(a goal scored in the first half)

VS.

A first half goal
(the first time that part of a goal has been scored)

**REMEMBER!**

Don't confuse hyphens with dashes.

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