

PHRASES

In the English language, sentences may contain few different language units or building blocks which we refer to as words, phrases, and clauses.

If we consider the building block nature of language, then we can see how: Phrases are the next language unit up from single words. Clauses are the next language unit up from phrases, because they contain subjects and verbs. Complete sentences are the next language unit up from clauses, because they have a sense of completion. Ten types of phrases exist:

1) NOUN PHRASES

A noun phrase contains a noun and any modifiers (including determiners, adjectives, and adverbs). The subject of a sentence may be a noun phrase. Furthermore, noun phrases may serve as subjects, complements, and objects.

EX:

The perfect day is Monday.

2) VERB PHRASES

A verb phrase contains the main verb and any auxiliary (or helping) verbs

EX:

William has been sitting on the couch.

3) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A prepositional phrase contains a preposition, an object (a noun or pronoun), and any modifiers.

EX:

Dave drove his car around the neighborhood.

4) APPOSITIVE PHRASES

An appositive phrase contains additional information about a noun (or subject) in the sentence.

EX:

Barack Obama, the forty-fourth president of the United States, was born in Hawaii.

5) INFINITIVE PHRASES

An infinitive phrase contains an infinitive (the word "to" + a verb, such as to know, to jump, to teach, etc.). This phrase can function as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

EX:

To learn Karate is a good thing.

6) GERUND PHRASES

Gerund phrases contain gerunds (a verb ending in –ing, such as running, jumping, teaching, etc.). This phrase functions primarily as a noun.

EX:

Running in place is good exercise.

Teaching in public schools is a worthwhile endeavor.

7) PARTICIPIAL PHRASES

Participial Phrases contain a participle (a past participle – such as *taken, left, given, broken-*, or a present participle containing the verb + -ing). Participle phrases function primarily as adjectives.

EX:

Shaken and forgotten, the kitten searched for warmth.

8) SIGNAL PHRASES

Signal Phrases contain a noun/pronoun, a reporting verb, and any modifier.

EX:

In discussing his religious beliefs, Professor Einstein stated, “Science without religions is lame; religion without science is blind.”

9) ADJECTIVE PHRASES

Adjective phrases contain an adjective and its modifiers (other adjectives or adverbs).

EX:

She is really very beautiful.

10) ADVERB PHRASES

Adverb Phrases contain an adverb and its modifiers (other adverbs)

EX:

Jennifer runs rather exceptionally.