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MICHAEL SWAN

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Practical English Usage



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USAGE

Third Edition

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PRACTICAL ENGLISH USAGE



Dedication

To John Eckersley, who first encouraged my interest in this kind of thing.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the people who have helped me with the preparation of this third edition. A large number of teachers in different countries were kind enough to respond to an enquiry asking how they felt *Practical English Usage* could be improved: their feedback was extremely helpful, and I am very much in their debt. I am also greatly indebted to David Baker, whose comments and suggestions have added very significantly to the accuracy and clarity of the book, and to Hideo Hibino and Kenji Kashino, who have contributed valuable advice on specific problems. Many other teachers and students – too many to name – have taken the trouble to suggest ways in which particular entries could be improved; their input has benefited the book considerably. My use of the internet as a source of instances of authentic usage has been greatly facilitated by the kind assistance of Hiroaki Sato, of Senshu University, Japan, who made available his excellent software tool KwiconGugle. I must also reacknowledge my debt to Jonathan Blundell, Norman Coe, Michio Kawakami, Michael Macfarlane, Nigel Middlemiss, Keith Mitchell, Catherine Walter, Gareth Watkins, and the many other consultants and correspondents whose help and advice with the preparation of the first and second editions continue as an important contribution to the third.

Any pedagogic grammarian owes an enormous debt to the academic linguists on whose research he or she is parasitic. There is not enough space to mention all the scholars of the last hundred years or so on whose work I have drawn directly or indirectly, even if I had a complete record of my borrowings. But I must at least pay homage to two monumental reference works of the present generation: the *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (Longman 1985), and the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, by Huddleston, Pullum and others (Cambridge University Press 2002). Their authoritative accounts of the facts of English structure and usage constitute an essential source of information for anyone writing pedagogic grammar materials today.

Finally, it is with particular pleasure that I express my gratitude, once again, to the editorial, design and production team at Oxford University Press, whose professional expertise is matched only by their concern to make an author's task as trouble-free as possible.

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Introduction

The purpose of this book

English, like all languages, is full of problems for the foreign learner. Some of these points are easy to explain – for instance, the formation of questions, the difference between *since* and *for*, the meaning of *after all*. Other problems are more tricky, and cause difficulty even for advanced students and teachers. How exactly is the present perfect used? When do we use past tenses to be polite? What are the differences between *at*, *on* and *in* with expressions of place? We can say *a chair leg* – why not **a cat leg*? When can we use the expression *do so*? When is *the* used with superlatives? Is *unless* the same as *if not*? What are the differences between *come* and *go*, between *each* and *every*, between *big*, *large* and *great*, between *fairly*, *quite*, *rather* and *pretty*? Is it correct to say *There's three more bottles in the fridge*? How do you actually say $3 \times 4 = 12$? And so on, and so on.

Practical English Usage is a guide to problems of this kind. It deals with over 600 points which regularly cause difficulty to foreign students of English. It will be useful, for example, to a learner who is not sure how to use a particular structure, or who has made a mistake and wants to find out why it is wrong. It will also be helpful to a teacher who is looking for a clear explanation of a difficult language point. There is very full coverage of grammar, as well as explanations of a large number of common vocabulary problems. There are also some entries designed to clarify more general questions (e.g. formality, slang, the nature of standard English and dialects) which students and teachers may find themselves concerned with.

Level

The book is intended for higher level students of English and for teachers. Being a reference book, it contains information at various levels, ranging from relatively simple points to quite advanced problems.

Organisation

Problems are mostly explained in short separate entries: the book is more like a dictionary than a grammar in form. This makes it possible to give a clear complete treatment of each point, and enables the user to concentrate just on the question that he or she needs information about. Entries that deal with related topics (e.g. different uses of a tense) are grouped where this is useful, but can be read separately. In longer entries, basic information is generally given first, followed by more detailed explanations and discussions of less important points. Entries are arranged alphabetically by title and numbered in sequence. A comprehensive Index (pages 624–658) shows where each point can be found (see 'How to find things', page x).

Approach and style

I have tried to make the presentation as practical as possible. Each entry contains an explanation of a problem, examples of correct usage, and (when this is useful) examples of typical mistakes. In some cases, an explanation may be somewhat different from that found in many learners' grammars; this is because

the rules traditionally given for certain points (e.g. conditionals or indirect speech) are not always accurate or helpful. Explanations are, as far as possible, in simple everyday language. Where it has been necessary to use grammatical terminology, I have generally preferred to use traditional terms that are simple and easy to understand, except where this would be seriously misleading. Some of these terms (e.g. future tense) would be regarded as unsatisfactory by academic grammarians, but I am not writing for specialists. There is a dictionary of the terminology used in the book on pages xvii–xxv.

The kind of English described

The explanations deal mainly with standard modern everyday British English, and are illustrated with realistic examples of current usage. Both explanations and examples have been thoroughly checked against large electronic databases ('corpora') of authentic spoken and written English. Stylistic differences (e.g. between formal and informal usage, or spoken and written language) are mentioned where this is appropriate. The few grammatical differences between British and American English are also described, and there is a good deal of information about other British-American differences, but the book is not intended as a systematic guide to American usage.

Correctness

If people say that a form is not 'correct', they can mean several different things. They may for instance be referring to a sentence like **I have seen her yesterday*, which normally only occurs in the English of foreigners. They may be thinking of a usage like *less people* (instead of *fewer people*), which is common in standard English but regarded as wrong by some people. Or they may be talking about forms like **ain't* or 'double negatives', which are used in speech by many British and American people, but which do not occur in the standard dialects and are not usually written. This book is mainly concerned with the first kind of 'correctness': the differences between British or American English and 'foreign' English. However, there is also information about cases of divided usage in standard English, and about a few important dialect forms. (For a discussion of different kinds of English, see 308–309.)

How important is correctness?

If someone makes too many mistakes in a foreign language, he or she can be difficult to understand, so a reasonable level of correctness is important. However, it is quite unnecessary to speak or write a language perfectly in order to communicate effectively (very few adults in fact achieve a perfect command of another language). Learners should aim to avoid serious mistakes (and a book like *Practical English Usage* will help considerably with this); but they should not become obsessed with correctness, or worry every time they make a mistake. Grammar is not the most important thing in the world!

What this book does not do

Practical English Usage is not a complete guide to the English language. As the title suggests, its purpose is practical: to give learners and their teachers the most important information they need in order to deal with common language problems. Within this framework, the explanations are as complete and accurate as I can make them. However it is not always helpful or possible in a book of this kind to deal with all the details of a complex structural point; so readers may well find occasional exceptions to some of the grammatical rules given here. Equally, the book does not aim to replace a dictionary. While it gives information about common problems with the use of a number of words, it does not attempt to describe other meanings or uses of the words beside those points that are selected for attention.

Other reference books

A book like this gives explanations of individual points of usage, but does not show how the separate points 'fit together'. Those who need a systematically organised account of the whole of English grammar should consult a book such as the *Oxford Learner's Grammar*, by John Eastwood (Oxford University Press), *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*, by Greenbaum and Quirk (Longman), or *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* (Collins). For a detailed treatment of English vocabulary, see the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the *Macmillan English Dictionary* or the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*.

Changes in the third edition

English, like all languages, is changing, and British English is currently being quite strongly influenced by American English. Consequently, some usages which were unusual in standard British English a few decades ago have now become common – for example, the use of *like* as a conjunction (e.g. *like I do*), or the use of *Do you have . . . ?* to ask about the immediate present (e.g. *Do you have a light?*). The third edition takes account of a number of changes of this kind, in order to give a fully up-to-date description of contemporary usage.

How to find things

The best way to find information about a particular point is to look in the Index on pages 624–658. (The overview on pages xi–xvi is intended only to give a general picture of the topics covered in the book; it is not a complete guide to the contents.) Most points are indexed under several different names, so it is not difficult to locate the entry you need. For instance, if you want to know why we say *I'm not used to driving on the left* instead of *I'm not used to drive on the left*, you can find the number of the section where this is explained by looking in the index under 'used', 'be used', 'to' or '-ing forms'. (On the other hand, it would obviously not be helpful to look under 'drive': the rule is a general one about the use of *-ing* forms after *be used to*, not about the verb *drive* in particular.)

Contents Overview

This overview gives a general picture of the topics covered in the book; it is not a complete guide to the contents. References are to entry numbers. To find information about a particular point, consult the Index on pages 624–658,

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Language terminology

The following words and expressions are used in this book to talk about grammar and other aspects of language.

abstract noun (the opposite of a **concrete noun**) the name of something which we experience as an idea, not by seeing, touching etc. Examples: *doubt*; *height*; *geography*.

active An active verb form is one like *breaks*, *told*, *will help* (not like *is broken*, *was told*, *will be helped*, which are **passive** verb forms). The subject of an active verb is usually the person or thing that does the action, or that is responsible for what happens.

adjective a word like *green*, *hungry*, *impossible*, which is used when we describe people, things, events etc. Adjectives are used in connection with nouns and pronouns. Examples: *a green apple*; *She's hungry*.

adverb a word like *tomorrow*, *once*, *badly*, *there*, *also*, which is used to say, for example, when, where or how something happens. There are very many kinds of adverbs with different functions: see 22–27.

adverb particle a short adverb like *up*, *out*, *off*, often used as part of a phrasal verb (e.g. *clean up*, *look out*, *tell off*).

affirmative an affirmative sentence is one that makes a positive statement – not a negative sentence or a question. Compare *I agree* (affirmative); *I don't agree* (negative).

agent In a passive sentence, the agent is the expression that says who or what an action is done by. Example: *This picture was probably painted by a child*.

article *A*, *an* and *the* are called 'articles'. *A/an* is called the 'indefinite article'; *the* is called the 'definite article'.

aspect Grammarians prefer to talk about progressive and perfective aspect, rather than progressive and perfect tense, since these forms express other ideas besides time (e.g. continuity, completion). However, in this book the term *tense* is often used to include aspect, for the sake of simplicity.

attributive Adjectives placed before nouns are in 'attributive position'. Examples: *a green shirt*; *my noisy son*. See also **predicative**.

auxiliary verb a verb like *be*, *have*, *do* which is used with another verb to make tenses, passive forms etc. Examples: *She was writing*; *Where have you put it?* See also **modal auxiliary verb**.

clause a part of a sentence which contains a subject and a verb, usually joined to the rest of a sentence by a conjunction. Example: *Mary said that she was tired*. (The word *clause* is also sometimes used for structures containing participles or infinitives with no subject or conjunction. Example: *Not knowing what to do*, *I telephoned Robin*.)

cleft sentence a sentence in which special emphasis is given to one part (e.g. the subject or the object) by using a structure with *it* or *what*. Examples: *It was you that caused the accident*; *What I need is a drink*.

collective noun a singular word for a group. Examples: *family*; *team*.

comparative the form of an adjective or adverb made with *-er* (e.g. *older*, *faster*); also the structure *more* + adjective/adverb, used in the same way (e.g. *more useful*, *more politely*).

- complement** (1) a part of a sentence that gives more information about the subject (after *be*, *seem* and some other verbs), or, in some structures, about the object. Examples: *You're the right person to help*; *She looks very kind*; *They elected him President*.
 (2) a structure or words needed after a noun, adjective, verb or preposition to complete its meaning. Examples: *the intention to travel*; *full of water*; *try phoning*; *down the street*.
- compound** a compound noun, verb, adjective, preposition etc is one that is made of two or more parts. Examples: *bus driver*; *get on with*; *one-eyed*.
- concrete noun** (the opposite of an **abstract noun**) the name of something which we can experience by seeing, touching etc. Examples: *cloud*; *petrol*; *raspberry*.
- conditional** (1) a verb form made by using the auxiliary *would* (also *should* after *I* and *we*). Examples: *I would run*; *She would sing*; *We should think*.
 (2) a clause or sentence containing *if* (or a word with a similar meaning), and perhaps containing a conditional verb form. Examples: *If you try you'll understand*; *I should be surprised if she knew*; *What would you have done if the train had been late?*
- conjunction** a word like *and*, *but*, *although*, *because*, *when*, *if*, which can be used to join clauses together. Example: *I rang because I was worried*.
- consonant** for example, the letters *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *g* and their usual sounds (see phonetic alphabet, page xxx). See also **vowel**.
- continuous** the same as **progressive**.
- contraction** a short form in which a subject and an auxiliary verb, or an auxiliary verb and the word *not*, are joined together into one word. Contractions are also made with non-auxiliary *be* and *have*. Examples: *I'm*; *who've*; *John'll*; *can't*.
- co-ordinate clause** one of two or more main or subordinate clauses of equal 'value' that are connected. Examples: *Shall I come to your place or would you like to come to mine?*; *It's cooler today and there's a bit of a wind*; *she said that it was late and that she was tired*. See also **main clause**, **subordinate clause**.
- copular verb** the same as **link verb**.
- countable noun** a noun like *car*, *dog*, *idea*, which can have a plural form, and can be used with the indefinite article *a/an*. See also **uncountable noun**.
- declarative question** a question which has the same grammatical form as a statement. Example: *That's your girlfriend?*
- definite article** *the*.
- defining relative** see **identifying relative**.
- demonstrative** *this*, *these*, *that*, *those*.
- determiner** one of a group of words that begin noun phrases. Determiners include *a/an*, *the*, *my*, *this*, *each*, *either*, *several*, *more*, *both*, *all*.
- direct object** see **object**.
- direct speech** speech reported 'directly', in the words used by the original speaker (more or less), without any changes of tense, pronouns etc. Example: *She looked at me and said 'This is my money'*. See also **indirect speech**.
- discourse marker** a word or expression which shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context. A discourse marker may, for example, connect a sentence with what comes before or after, or it may show the speaker's attitude to what he/she is saying. Examples: *on the other hand*; *frankly*; *as a matter of fact*.

- duration** how long something lasts. The preposition *for* can be used with an expression of time to indicate duration.
- ellipsis** leaving out words when their meaning can be understood from the context. Examples: *(It's a) Nice day, isn't it?*; *It was better than I expected (it would be)*.
- emphasis** giving special importance to one part of a word or sentence (for example by pronouncing it more loudly; by writing it in capital letters; by using *do* in an affirmative clause; by using special word order).
- emphatic pronoun** reflexive pronoun (*myself, yourself* etc) used to emphasise a noun or pronoun. Examples: *I'll tell him myself*; *I wouldn't sell this to the king himself*. See also **reflexive pronoun**.
- ending** something added to the end of a word, e.g. *-er, -ing, -ed*.
- first person** see **person**.
- formal** the style used when talking politely to strangers, on special occasions, in some literary writing, in business letters, etc. For example, *commence* is a more formal word than *start*.
- frequency** Adverbs of frequency say how often something happens. Examples: *often; never; daily; occasionally*.
- fronting** moving a part of a clause to the beginning in order to give it special emphasis. Example: *Jack I like, but his wife I can't stand*.
- full verb** see **main verb**.
- future** a verb form made with the auxiliary *shall/will* + infinitive without *to*. Examples; *I shall arrive; Will it matter?*
- future perfect** a verb form made with *shall/will* + *have* + past participle. Example: *I will have finished by lunchtime*.
- future progressive (or future continuous)** a verb form made with *shall/will* + *be* + *...ing*. Example: *I will be needing the car this evening*.
- gender** the use of different grammatical forms to show the difference between masculine, feminine and neuter, or between human and non-human. Examples: *he; she; it; who; which*.
- gerund** the form of a verb ending in *-ing*, used like a noun (for example, as the subject or object of a sentence). Examples: *Smoking is bad for you; I hate getting up early*. See also **present participle**.
- gradable** *Pretty, hard* or *cold* are gradable adjectives: things can be more or less *pretty, hard* or *cold*. Adverbs of degree (like *rather, very*) can be used with gradable words. *Perfect* or *dead* are not gradable words: we do not usually say that something is *more* or *less perfect*, or *very dead*.
- grammar** the rules that show how words are combined, arranged or changed to show certain kinds of meaning.
- hypothetical** Some words and structures (e.g. modal verbs, *if*-clauses) are used for hypothetical situations – that is to say, situations which may not happen, or are imaginary. Example: *What would you do if you had six months free?*
- identifying (or defining) relative clause** a relative clause which identifies a noun – which tells us which person or thing is being talked about. Example: *There's the woman who tried to steal your cat*. (The relative clause *who tried to steal your cat* identifies the woman – it tells us which woman is meant.) See also **non-identifying relative clause**.
- imperative** the form of a verb used to give orders, make suggestions, etc. Examples: *Bring me a pen; Have a good holiday*.

indefinite article *a/an*.

indirect object see **object**.

indirect speech a structure in which we report what somebody said by making it part of our own sentence (so that the tenses, word order, and pronouns and other words may be different from those used by the original speaker). Compare: *He said 'I'm tired'* (the original speaker's words are reported in direct speech) and *He said that he was tired* (the original speaker's words are reported in indirect speech).

infinitive the 'base' form of a word (usually with *to*), used after another verb, after an adjective or noun, or as the subject or complement of a sentence. Examples: *I want to go home; It's easy to sing; I've got a plan to start a business; To err is human, to forgive divine.*

informal the style used in ordinary conversation, personal letters etc, when there is no special reason to speak politely or carefully. *I'll* is more informal than *I will*; *get* is used mostly in an informal style; *start* is a more informal word than *commence*.

-ing form the form of a verb ending in *-ing*. Examples: *finding; keeping; running*. See also **gerund**, **present participle**.

initial at the beginning. *Sometimes* is an adverb that can go in initial position in a sentence. Example: *Sometimes I wish I had a different job*.

intensifying making stronger, more emphatic. *Very* and *terribly* are intensifying adverbs.

interrogative Interrogative structures and words are used for asking questions. In an interrogative sentence, there is an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be*) before the subject (e.g. *Can you swim?; Are you ready?*). *What, who* and *where* are interrogative words.

intonation the 'melody' of spoken language: the way the musical pitch of the voice rises and falls to show meaning, sentence structure or mood.

intransitive An intransitive verb is one that cannot have an object or be used in the passive. Examples: *smile; fall; come; go*.

inversion a structure in which an auxiliary or other verb comes before its subject. Examples: *Never had she seen such a mess; Here comes John*.

irregular not following the normal rules. or not having the usual form. An irregular verb has a past tense and/or past participle that does not end in *-ed* (e.g. *swam, taken*); *children* is an irregular plural.

link verb (or copular verb) *be, seem, feel* and other verbs which link a subject to a complement that describes it. Examples: *My mother is in Jersey; He seems unhappy; This feels soft*.

main clause, subordinate clause Some sentences consist of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. A subordinate clause acts like a part of the main clause (e.g. like a subject, or an object, or an adverbial). Examples: *Where she is doesn't matter* (the subordinate clause *Where she is* is the subject of the main clause); *I told you that I didn't care* (the subordinate clause *that I didn't care* is the direct object in the main clause); *You'll find friends wherever you go* (the subordinate clause *wherever you go* acts like an adverb in the main clause: compare *You'll find friends anywhere*).

- main verb (or full verb)** A verb phrase often contains one or more auxiliary verbs together with a main verb. The main verb is the verb which expresses the central meaning; auxiliary verbs mostly add grammatical information (for instance they may show that a verb is progressive, future, perfect or passive). Examples: *is going; will explain; has arrived; would have been forgotten*.
- manner** an adverb of manner describes how something happens. Examples: *well; suddenly; fast*.
- mid-position** If an adverb is in mid-position in a sentence, it is with the verb. Example: *I have never been to Africa*.
- misrelated participle (also called hanging or dangling participle)** a participle which appears to have a subject which is not its own. Example: *Looking out of the window, the mountains appeared very close*. (This seems to say that the mountains were looking out of the window.) The structure is usually avoided in careful writing because of the danger of misunderstanding.
- modal auxiliary verb** one of the verbs *can, could, may, might, must, will, shall, would, should, ought*.
- modify** An adjective is said to 'modify' the noun it is with: it adds to or defines its meaning. Examples: *a fine day; my new job*. An adverb can modify a verb (e.g. *run fast*), an adjective (e.g. *completely ready*) or other words or expressions. In *sports car*, the first noun modifies the second.
- negative** a negative sentence is one in which the word *not* is used with the verb. Example: *I didn't know*.
- nominal relative clause** a relative clause (usually introduced by *what*) which acts as the subject, object or complement of a sentence. Example: *I gave him what he needed*.
- non-affirmative (also called non-assertive)** The words *some, somebody, somewhere* etc are used most often in affirmative sentences. In other kinds of sentence they are often replaced by *any, anybody, anywhere* etc. Words like *any, anybody* etc are called 'non-affirmative' or non-assertive' forms. Other non-affirmative forms are *yet* and *ever*.
- non-identifying (or non-defining) relative clause** a relative clause which does not identify the noun it refers to (because we already know which person or thing is meant). Example: *There's Hannah Smith, who tried to steal my cat*. (The relative clause, *who tried to steal my cat*, does not identify the person – she is already identified by the name *Hannah Smith*.) See also **identifying relative clause**.
- noun** a word like *oil, memory, arm*, which can be used with an article. Nouns are most often the names of people or things. Personal names (e.g. *George*) and place names (e.g. *Birmingham*) are called 'proper nouns'; they are usually used without articles.
- noun phrase** a group of words (e.g. article + adjective + noun) which acts as the subject, object or complement in a clause. Example: *the last bus*.
- number** the way in which differences between singular and plural are shown grammatically. The differences between *house* and *houses, mouse* and *mice, this* and *these* are differences of number.

object a noun phrase or pronoun that normally comes after the verb in an active clause. The direct object most often refers to a person or thing (or people or things) affected by the action of the verb. In the sentence *Take the dog for a walk*, *the dog* is the direct object. The indirect object usually refers to a person (or people) who receive(s) the direct object. In the sentence *Ann gave me a watch*, the indirect object is *me*, and the direct object is *a watch*. See also **subject**.

participle see **present participle** and **past participle**.

participle clause a clause-like structure which contains a participle, not a verb tense. Examples: *Discouraged by his failure, he resigned from his job*; *Having a couple of hours to spare, I went to see a film*.

passive A passive verb form is made with *be* + past participle. Examples: *is broken*; *was told*; *will be helped* (but not *breaks*, *told*, *will help*, which are active verb forms). The subject of a passive verb form is usually the person or thing that is affected by the action of the verb. Compare: *They sent Lucas to prison for five years* (active) and *Lucas was sent to prison for five years* (passive). See also **active**.

past participle a verb form like *broken*, *gone*, *stopped*, which can be used to form perfect tenses and passives, or as an adjective. (The meaning is not necessarily past, in spite of the name.)

past perfect a verb form made with *had* + past participle. Examples: *I had forgotten*; *The children had arrived*; *She had been working*; *It had been raining*. The first two examples are simple past perfect; the last two (with *had been* + ...*ing*) are past perfect progressive (or continuous).

past progressive (or continuous) a verb form made with *was/were* + ...*ing*. Examples: *I was going*; *They were stopping*.

past simple see **simple past**.

perfect a verb form made with the auxiliary *have* + past participle. Examples: *I have forgotten*; *She had failed*; *having arrived*; *to have finished*.

perfect conditional *should/would have* + past participle. Examples: *I should/would have agreed*; *He would have known*.

perfect infinitive *(to) have* + past participle. Example: *to have arrived*.

person the way in which, in grammar, we show the difference between the person(s) speaking (*first person*), the person(s) spoken to (*second person*), and the person, people or thing(s) spoken about (*third person*). The differences between *I* and *you*, or between *am*, *are* and *is*, are differences of person.

personal pronouns the words *I*, *me*, *you*, *he*, *him* etc.

phrase two or more words that function together as a group. Examples: *dead tired*; *the silly old woman*; *would have been repaired*; *in the country*.

phrasal verb a verb form that is made up of two parts: verb + adverb particle. Examples: *fill up*; *run over*; *take in*.

plural grammatical form used to refer to more than one person or thing.

Examples: *we*; *buses*; *children*; *are*; *many*; *these*. See also **singular**.

possessive a form used to show possession and similar ideas. Examples: *John's*; *our*; *mine*.

possessive pronoun *My*, *your*, *his*, *her* etc are possessive pronouns (they stand for 'the speaker's', 'the hearer's', 'that person's' etc). *Mine*, *yours*, *his*, *hers* etc are also possessive pronouns, for the same reason. *My*, *your* etc are used before nouns, so they are not only pronouns, but also determiners. (They are often called 'possessive adjectives', but this is not correct.) *Mine*, *yours* etc are used without following nouns.

- postmodifier** a word that comes after the word which it modifies, e.g. *invited* in *The people invited all came late*. See also **premodifier**.
- predicative** Adjectives placed after a verb like *be*, *seem*, *look* are in predicative position. Examples: *The house is enormous*; *She looks happy*. See also **attributive**.
- prefix** a form like *ex-*, *anti-* or *un-*, which can be added to the front of a word to give an additional or different meaning. Examples: *ex-wife*, *anti-British*, *unhappy*. See also **suffix**.
- premodifier** a word that comes before the word which it modifies, e.g. *invited* in *an invited audience*. See also **postmodifier**.
- preparatory subject, preparatory object** When the subject of a sentence is an infinitive or a clause, we usually put it towards the end of the sentence and use the pronoun *it* as a preparatory subject. Example: *It is important to get enough sleep*. *It* can also be used as a preparatory object in certain structures. Example: *He made it clear that he disagreed*. *There* is used as a kind of preparatory subject in *there is . . .* and similar structures. Example: *There is somebody at the door*.
- preposition** a word like *on*, *off*, *of*, *into*, normally followed by a noun or pronoun.
- prepositional verb** a verb form that is made up of two parts: verb form + preposition. Examples: *insist on*; *care for*; *listen to*.
- present participle** the form of a verb ending in *-ing*, used as an adjective, a verb or part of a verb. Examples: *a crying baby*; *Opening his newspaper, he started to read*; *She was running*. (The meaning is not necessarily present, in spite of the name.) See also **gerund**.
- present perfect** a verb form made with *have/has* + past participle. Examples: *I have forgotten*; *The children have arrived*; *I've been working all day*; *It has been raining*. The first two examples are simple present perfect; the last two (with *have been* + *. . .ing*) are present perfect progressive (or present perfect continuous).
- present progressive (or continuous)** a verb form made with *am/are/is* + *. . .ing*. Examples: *I am going*; *She is staying for two weeks*.
- present simple** see **simple present**.
- progressive (or continuous)** A verb form made with the auxiliary *be* + *. . .ing*. Examples: *to be going*; *We were wondering*; *I'll be seeing you*.
- progressive (or continuous) infinitive** a form like *to be going*; *to be waiting*.
- pronoun** a word like *it*, *yourself*, *their*, which is used instead of a more precise noun or noun phrase (like *the cat*, *Peter's self*, *the family's*). The word *pronoun* can also be used for a determiner when this includes the meaning of a following noun which has been left out. Example: *I'll take these*.
- proper noun or proper name** a noun (most often with no article) which is the name of a particular person, place, organisation etc. Examples: *Andrew*, *Brazil*; *the European Union*.
- quantifier** a determiner like *many*, *few*, *little*, *several*, which is used in a noun phrase to show how much or how many we are talking about.
- question tag** an expression like *do you?* or *isn't it?*, consisting of an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be* or *have*) + pronoun subject, put on to the end of a sentence. Examples: *You don't eat meat, do you?*; *It's a nice day, isn't it?*
- reflexive pronoun** *myself*, *yourself*, *himself* etc. Example: *I cut myself shaving this morning*. See also **emphatic pronoun**.

- regular** following the normal rules or having the usual form. *Hoped* is a regular past tense; *cats* is a regular plural. See also **irregular**.
- relative clause** a clause which modifies a noun, usually introduced by a relative pronoun like *who* or *which*. Example: *I like people who like me*. See also **identifying relative clause**, **non-identifying relative clause**.
- relative pronoun** a pronoun used to connect a relative clause to its noun. *Who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which* and *that* can be used as relative pronouns, and sometimes also *when*, *where* and *why*. Examples: *There's the man who wants to buy my car*; *This is the room which needs painting*; *Do you remember the day when we met?*
- reply question** a question (similar in structure to a question tag) used to reply to a statement, for instance to express interest. Example: *I've been invited to spend the weekend in London. ~ Have you, dear?*
- second person** see **person**.
- sentence** a group of words that expresses a statement, command, question or exclamation. A sentence consists of one or more clauses, and usually has at least one subject and verb. In writing, it begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.
- short answer** an answer consisting of a subject and an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be* or *have*). Examples: *Has anybody phoned the police? ~ John has.*; *Who's ready for more? ~ I am.*
- simple past (or past simple)** a past verb form that has no auxiliary verb in the affirmative. Examples: *I stopped*; *You heard*; *We knew*.
- simple present (or present simple)** a present verb form that has no auxiliary verb in the affirmative. Examples: *He goes there often*; *I know*; *I like chocolate*.
- simple** a verb form that is not progressive.
- singular** a grammatical form used to talk about one person, thing, etc, or about an uncountable quantity or mass. Examples: *me*; *bus*; *water*; *is*; *much*; *this*. See also **plural**.
- slang** a word, expression or special use of language found mainly in very informal speech, often in the usage of particular groups of people. Examples: *thick* (= stupid); *lose one's cool* (= get upset); *sparks* (= electrician).
- split infinitive** a structure in which an adverb comes between *to* and the rest of the infinitive. Example: *to easily understand*. Some people consider split infinitives 'incorrect', but they are common in standard usage.
- standard** A standard form of a language is the one that is most generally accepted for use in government, the law, business, education and literature. *I'm not* is standard English; *I ain't* is non-standard.
- statement** a sentence which gives information; not a question. Examples: *I'm cold*; *Philip didn't come home last night*.
- stress** the way in which one or more parts of a word, phrase or sentence are made to sound more important than the rest, by using a louder voice and/or higher pitch. In the word *particular*, the main stress is on the second syllable (*parTicular*); in the sentence *Where's the new secretary?* there are three stresses (*WHERE'S the NEW SEcretary?*).
- strong form, weak form** Certain words can be pronounced in two ways: slowly and carefully with the vowel that is written (strong form), or with a quicker pronunciation with the vowel /ə/ or /ɪ/ (weak form). Examples: *can* (/kæn/, /kən/), *was* (/wɒz/, /wəz/), *for* (/fɔ:(r)/, /fə(r)/).

- subject** a noun phrase or pronoun that normally comes before the verb in an affirmative clause. It often says (in an active clause) who or what does the action that the verb refers to. Examples: *Helen gave me a wonderful smile; Oil floats on water.* See also **object**.
- subjunctive** a verb form (not very common in British English) used in certain structures. Examples: *If I were you . . . ; It's important that he be informed immediately; We prefer that he pay in cash.*
- subordinate clause** a clause which functions as part of another clause, for example as subject, object or adverbial in the main clause of a sentence. Examples: *I thought that you understood; What I need is a drink; I'll follow you wherever you go.* See also **clause**, **main clause**.
- suffix** a form like *-ology*, *-able* or *-ese*, which can be added to the end of a word to give an additional or different meaning. Examples: *climatology; understandable; Chinese.* See also **prefix**.
- superlative** the form of an adjective or adverb made with the suffix *-est* (e.g. *oldest, fastest*); also the structure *most* + adjective/adverb, used in the same way (e.g. *most intelligent, most politely*).
- swearword** a taboo word used (usually with a change of meaning) to express strong emotion or emphasis. Example: *Fuck!*
- syllable** The word *cat* has one syllable, *cattle* has two, *cataract* has three and *category* has four. A syllable normally has a vowel, and usually one or more consonants before and/or after it. Sometimes the consonant sounds *l*, *m* and *n* can act as syllables (for instance in the words *bottle* /'bɒtl/, *capitalism* /'kæpɪtəlɪzəm/, *button* /'bʌtn/).
- taboo word** a word (e.g. *fuck*) connected with a subject (such as sex) which is not talked about freely, so that some of its vocabulary is considered shocking. Taboo words are not used in formal speech or writing, and are avoided altogether by many people. See also **swearword**.
- tag** a short phrase (e.g. pronoun subject + auxiliary verb) added on to the end of a sentence, especially in speech. Examples: *He likes to talk, John does; You can't swim, can you?; Very noisy, those kids.* See also **question tag**.
- tense** a verb form that shows the time of an action, event or state. Examples: *will go; is sitting; saw.*
- third person** see **person**.
- transitive** a transitive verb is one that can have an object. Examples: *eat (a meal); drive (a car); give (a present).* See also **intransitive**.
- uncountable noun** a noun which has no plural form and cannot normally be used with the article *a/an*. Examples: *mud; rudeness; furniture.*
- verb** a word like *ask, wake, play, be, can*, which can be used with a subject to form the basis of a clause. In clauses, verbs often consist of an auxiliary verb + infinitive or participle (e.g. *will go; has spoken*). Most verbs refer to actions, events or states. See also **auxiliary verb**, **modal auxiliary verb**, **verb phrase**.
- verb phrase** a verb that has more than one part. Example: *would have been forgotten.*
- vowel** the letters *a, e, i, o, u* and their combinations, and their usual sounds (see phonetic alphabet, page xxx). See also **consonant**.
- weak form** see **strong form**.

Don't say it! 130 common mistakes

35 basic mistakes to avoid. Check in the sections to see why they're wrong.

don't say/write	say/write	see section
Look – it rains.	Look – it's raining	461-464
It's often raining here.	It often rains here.	461-464
When I was 20 I was smoking.	When I was 20 I smoked.	422
I have seen Louis yesterday.	I saw Louis yesterday.	456
We're living here since April.	We've been living here since April.	460
I'll phone you when I will arrive.	I'll phone you when I arrive.	212
I'm not believing him.	I don't believe him.	471
I am born in Chicago.	I was born in Chicago.	108
My sister has 15 years.	My sister is 15 (years old).	32
I have cold in this house.	I am cold in this house.	92
I can to swim.	I can swim.	121
I must see the dentist yesterday.	I had to see the dentist yesterday.	358
I want go home.	I want to go home.	613
I came here for study English.	I came here to study English.	289
I drove there without to stop.	I drove there without stopping.	298
Where I can buy stamps?	Where can I buy stamps?	480
Is ready my new office?	Is my new office ready?	480
I'm no asleep.	I'm not asleep.	382
She looked, but she didn't see nothing.	... she didn't see anything. / ... she saw nothing.	370
Where is station?	Where is the station?	62
My sister is photographer.	My sister is a photographer.	62
You speak a very good English.	You speak very good English.	149
The life is difficult.	Life is difficult.	68
I haven't got some free time today.	I haven't got any free time today.	547
Everybody were late.	Everybody was late.	548
It is more cold today.	It is colder today.	137
It's too much hot in this house.	It's too hot in this house.	595
The man which lives here is from Greece.	The man who lives here is from Greece.	494
The people in this town is very friendly.	The people in this town are very friendly.	524
She never listens me.	She never listens to me.	449
We went at the seaside on Sunday.	We went to the seaside on Sunday.	80
I like very much skiing.	I very much like skiing. / I like skiing very much.	611
This soup isn't enough hot.	This soup isn't hot enough.	187
I gave to her my address.	I gave her my address.	610
I have done a mistake.	I have made a mistake.	160

**35 mistakes that intermediate students often make.
Check in the sections to see why they're wrong.**

don't say/write	say/write	see section
I promise I pay you tomorrow.	I promise I'll pay you tomorrow.	217
This is the first time I'm here.	... the first time I've been here.	591
I've been here since three days.	... for three days.	208
If I'll have time, I'll go home.	If I have time, ...	257
If I knew the price, I will tell you.	... I would tell you.	258
He said me that he was Chinese.	He told me that he was Chinese.	504
She told me she has a headache.	She told me she had a headache.	275
There's the man that I work for him.	There's the man that I work for.	494
I've told you all what I know.	... all (that) I know.	494
Although it was late, but she went out.	Although it was late, she went out.	511
You have better to see the doctor.	You had better see the doctor.	230
I use to play tennis at weekends.	I play tennis at weekends.	604
It can rain this evening.	It may/might/could rain ...	345
My parents wanted that I study.	My parents wanted me to study.	283
You must stop to smoke.	... stop smoking.	299
I look forward to see you.	I look forward to seeing you.	298
I'm boring in the lessons.	I'm bored in the lessons.	409
He has much money.	He has a lot of / plenty of money.	357
Most of people agree with me.	Most people ...	356
I looked at me in the mirror.	I looked at myself ...	493
We waited during six hours.	... for six hours.	167
I like eating chocolate milk.	... milk chocolate.	385
Come here and look at that paper.	Come here and look at this paper.	589
We go there every Saturdays.	... every Saturday.	193
Which is the biggest city of the world?	... the biggest city in the world?	139
I'm thinking to change my job.	I'm thinking of changing my job.	588
Can you give me an information?	... some information?	148
He's married with a doctor.	He's married to a doctor.	449
Can you mend this until Tuesday?	... by Tuesday?	602
There's a hotel in front of our house.	... opposite our house.	402
I like warm countries, as Spain.	... warm countries, like Spain.	326
Please explain me what you want.	... explain to me ...	198
When you come, take your bike.	... bring your bike.	112
My brother has got a new work.	... a new job.	148
He's Dutch, or better Belgian.	He's Dutch, or rather Belgian.	157

Even advanced students make mistakes. Here are 35.
Check in the sections to see why they're wrong.

don't say/write	say/write	see section
I'll ask you in case I need help.	I'll ask you if I need help.	271
I object to tell them my age.	I object to telling them my age.	298
I like the 60s music.	I like 60s music. / the music of the 60s.	69
ten thousand, a hundred and six	ten thousand, one hundred ...	389
'Who's that?' ~ 'He's John.'	... 'It's John.'	428
I don't like to be shouted.	I don't like to be shouted at.	416
It's ages since she's arrived.	It's ages since she arrived.	522
The police is looking for him.	The police are looking ...	524
Prices are surely rising fast.	Prices are certainly rising fast.	573
I have big respect for her ideas.	... great respect ...	106
I don't like nowadays fashions.	... today's/modern fashions.	388
She passed her exam, what surprised everybody.	... which surprised everybody.	494
I've good knowledge of German.	... a good knowledge of German.	149
Finally! Where have you been?	At last! ...	204
I'll be home since 3 o' clock.	... from 3 o' clock.	308
We waited one and a half hour.	... one and a half hours.	231
It's time they go home.	It's time they went home.	306
I'll see you a few days later.	... in a few days.	315
All along the centuries, there have been wars.	All through the centuries ...	45
I want a completely other colour.	... a completely different colour.	54
Let's go and have coffee to Marcel's.	... at Marcel's.	80
That's mine – I saw it at first!	... I saw it first!	84
Switzerland is among Germany, France, Austria and Italy.	... between Germany, France, Austria and Italy.	105
According to me, it's a bad film.	In my opinion / I think ...	8
It was a too good party to miss.	... too good a party ...	14
Whole Paris was celebrating.	The whole of Paris ...	40
I nearly wish I'd stayed at home.	I almost wish ...	43
One speaks Italian in my town.	We/They speak ...	396
The girl wants an own room.	... her own room.	405
Couldn't you help me, please?	Could you ...? / You couldn't ..., could you?	368
I'll try to know when it starts.	I'll try to find out when it starts.	313
I love this so beautiful country.	... this country – it's so beautiful.	538
It's getting winter.	It's getting to be winter.	223
Our flat is decorated this week.	... is being decorated ...	412
The Mont Blanc is 4808m high.	Mont Blanc is ...	70

Even very advanced students can make mistakes – nobody's perfect! Here are 25. Do you know why they're wrong? Check in the sections.

don't say/write	say/write	see section
No doubt the world is getting warmer.	There is no doubt that the world is getting warmer.	377
I can't think of anybody whom to invite.	I can't think of anybody to invite.	498
My father, whom we hope will be out of hospital soon, ...	My father, who we hope ...	498
Would you follow me wherever I would go?	... wherever I went?	580
We all have to live in the society.	... in society.	68
The number of the unemployed is going up.	The number of unemployed ...	70
She was showing tiredness signs.	... signs of tiredness.	382
She works the hardest when she's working for her family.	She works hardest ...	141
I'm thankful for your help.	I'm grateful ...	582
We talked about if it was ready.	... about whether it was ready.	453
What live in those little holes?	What lives ...	532
Some people are interested, but the majority doesn't care.	... the majority don't care.	526
It mustn't be the postman at the door. It's only 7 o' clock.	It can't be the postman ...	359
A third of the students is from abroad.	... are from abroad.	389
Except Angie, everybody was there.	Except for Angie ...	194
I wish you felt / would feel better tomorrow.	I hope you feel ...	630
The train may be late, as it happened yesterday.	... as happened yesterday.	581
When I wrote my letters, I did some gardening.	When I had written ...	424
When I had opened the door, the children ran in.	When I opened ...	424
Stefan can never return back to his country.	... return to his country. / ... go back to his country.	87
Will you go and see me when I'm in hospital?	... come and see me ...	134
May you go camping this summer?	Do you think you'll go ...	339
My cousin works for the NATO.	... for NATO.	2
My wife will be angry unless I'm home by 7.00.	... if I'm not home ...	601
We were poured water on.	We had water poured on us. / Water was poured on us.	416

Phonetic alphabet

It is necessary to use a special alphabet to show the pronunciation of English words, because the ordinary English alphabet does not have enough letters to represent all the sounds of the language. The following list contains all the letters of the phonetic alphabet used in this book, with examples of the words in which the sounds they refer to are found.

Vowels and diphthongs (double vowels)

i:	seat /sɪ:t/, feel /fi:l/	eɪ	take /teɪk/, wait /weɪt/
ɪ	sit /sɪt/, in /ɪn/	aɪ	mine /maɪn/, light /laɪt/
e	set /set/, any /'eni:/	ɔɪ	oil /ɔɪl/, boy /bɔɪ/
æ	sat /sæt/, match /mætʃ/	əʊ	no /nəʊ/, open /'əʊpən/
ɑ:	march /mɑ:tʃ/, after /'ɑ:ftə(r)/	aʊ	house /haʊs/, now /naʊ/
ɒ	pot /pɒt/, gone /gɒn/	ɪə	hear /hɪə(r)/, deer /dɪə(r)/
ɔ:	port /pɔ:t/, law /lɔ:/	eə	air /eə(r)/, where /weə(r)/
ʊ	good /gʊd/, could /kʊd/	ʊə	tour /tʊə(r)/, endure /m'dʒʊə(r)/
u:	food /fu:d/, group /gru:p/		
ʌ	much /mʌtʃ/, front /frʌnt/		
ɜ:	turn /tɜ:n/, word /wɜ:d/		
ə	away /ə'weɪ/, collect /kə'lekt/, until /ən'tɪl/		

Consonants

p	pull /pʊl/, cup /kʌp/	tʃ	cheap /tʃi:p/, catch /kætʃ/
b	bull /bʊl/, rob /rɒb/	dʒ	jail /dʒeɪl/, bridge /brɪdʒ/
f	ferry /'feri:/, life /laɪf/	k	case /keɪs/, take /teɪk/
v	veri /'veri:/, live /lɪv/	g	go /gəʊ/, rug /rʌg/
θ	think /θɪŋk/, bath /bɑ:θ/	m	my /maɪ/, come /kʌm/
ð	then /ðen/, with /wɪð/	n	no /nəʊ/, on /ɒn/
t	take /teɪk/, set /set/	ŋ	sing /sɪŋ/, finger /'fɪŋgə(r)/
d	day /deɪ/, red /red/	l	love /lʌv/, hole /həʊl/
s	sing /sɪŋ/, rice /raɪs/	r	round /raʊnd/, carry /'kæri:/
z	zoo /zu:/, days /deɪz/	w	well /wel/
ʃ	show /ʃəʊ/, wish /wɪʃ/	j	young /jʌŋ/
ʒ	pleasure /'pleʒə(r)/, occasion /ə'keɪʒən/	h	house /haʊs/

The sign (') shows stress (see 554).

1 abbreviated styles

Some styles of writing and speech have their own special grammar rules, often because of the need to save space or time.

1 advertisements and instructions

Small ads and instructions often leave out articles, subject or object pronouns, forms of *be* and prepositions.

Single man looking for flat Oxford area. Phone 806127 weekends.

Job needed urgently. Will do anything legal. Call 312654.

Pour mixture into large saucepan, heat until boiling, then add three pounds sugar and leave on low heat for 45 minutes.

2 notes

Informal notes, to-do lists, diary entries etc often follow similar rules.

Gone to hairdresser. Back 12.30.

Book tickets phone Ann see Joe 11.00 meeting Sue lunch

The same style is common in postcards, short informal letters and emails (see 147).

Dear Gran

Watching tennis on TV. A good book. Three meals a day. No washing-up.

Clean sheets every day. Everything done for me. Yes, you've guessed – in hospital!!

Only went to doctor for cold – landed up in hospital with pneumonia!! If you have time please tell the others – would love some letters to cheer me up.

Hope to see you.

Love, Pam

3 commentaries

Commentaries on fast-moving events like football matches also have their own kind of grammar. Auxiliaries and other less important verbs are often left out.

Goal kick . . . And the score still Spurs 3, Arsenal 1 . . . that's Pearce . . . Pearce to Coates . . . good ball . . . Sawyer running wide . . . Billings takes it, through to Matthews, Matthews with a cross, oh, and Billings in beautifully, a good chance there – and it's a goal!

4 titles, notices etc

Titles, labels, headings, notices and slogans usually consist of short phrases, not complete sentences. Articles are often left out, especially in the names of buildings and institutions.

ROYAL HOTEL

INFORMATION OFFICE

MORE MONEY FOR NURSES!

5 headlines

News headlines have their own special grammar and vocabulary. For details, see 240.

RECORD DRUGS HAUL AT AIRPORT: SIX HELD

FOUR DIE IN M6 BLAZE

For other rules about leaving words out ('ellipsis'), see 177–182.