

## Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

### The Top 24 Grammatical Terms

#### 1. Active Voice

The verb form in which the subject of the sentence performs or causes the action expressed by the verb. Contrast with Passive Voice.

*Example:*

“A census taker once **tried** to test me. I **ate** his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.”  
(Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1991)

#### 2. Adjective

The part of speech (or word class) that modifies a noun or a pronoun.

*Example:*

“Send this **pestilent, traitorous, cow-hearted, yeasty** codpiece to the brig.”  
(Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, 2007)

#### 3. Adverb

The part of speech that modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb.

*Example:*

“There I was, standing there in the church and for the first time in my whole life I realized I **totally** and **utterly** loved one person.”  
(Charles to Carrie in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, 1994)

#### 4. Clause

A group of words that contains a subject and a predicate. A clause may be either a sentence (independent clause) or a sentence-like construction included within another sentence (dependent clause).

*Example:*

“**Don't ever argue with the big dog** [*independent clause*], **because the big dog is always right** [*dependent clause*].”  
(Deputy Marshal Samuel Gerard in *The Fugitive*, 1993)

#### 5. Complex Sentence

A sentence that contains at least one independent clause and one dependent clause.

*Example:*

“**Don't ever argue with the big dog** [*independent clause*], **because the big dog is always right** [*dependent clause*].”  
(Deputy Marshal Samuel Gerard in *The Fugitive*, 1993)

#### 6. Compound Sentence

A sentence that contains at least two independent clauses, often joined by a conjunction.

*Example:*

“**I can't compete with you physically** [*independent clause*], **and you're no match for my brains** [*independent clause*].”  
(Vizzini in *The Princess Bride*, 1987)

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### 7. Conjunction

The part of speech that serves to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.

*Example:*

“I can’t compete with you physically, **and** you’re no match for my brains.”  
(Vizzini in *The Princess Bride*, 1987)

### 8. Declarative Sentence

A sentence that makes a statement.

*Example:*

“**A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.**”  
(Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1991)

### 9. Dependent Clause

A group of words that begins with a relative pronoun or a subordinating conjunction. A dependent clause has both a subject and a verb but (unlike an independent clause) cannot stand alone as a sentence (also known as a subordinate clause).

*Example:*

“**Don’t ever argue with the big dog** [*independent clause*], **because the big dog is always right** [*dependent clause*].”  
(Deputy Marshal Samuel Gerard in *The Fugitive*, 1993)

### 10. Direct Object

A noun or pronoun that receives the action of a transitive verb.

*Example:*

“All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my **daddy**. I had to fight my **uncles**. I had to fight my **brothers**.”  
(Sophia in *The Color Purple*, 1985)

### 11. Exclamatory Sentence

A sentence that expresses strong feelings by making an exclamation.

*Example:*

“**God! Look at that thing! You would’ve gone straight to the bottom!**”  
(Jack Dawson looking at Rose’s ring in *Titanic*, 1997)

### 12. Imperative Sentence

A sentence that gives advice or instructions or that expresses a request or a command.

*Example:*

“**Send this pestilent, traitorous, cow-hearted, yeasty codpiece to the brig.**”  
(Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End*, 2007)

### 13. Independent Clause

A group of words made up of a subject and a predicate. An independent clause (unlike a dependent clause) can stand alone as a sentence. Also known as a main clause.

*Example:*

“**Don’t ever argue with the big dog** [*independent clause*], **because the big dog is always right** [*dependent clause*].”  
(Deputy Marshal Samuel Gerard in *The Fugitive*, 1993)

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### 14. Indirect Object

A noun or pronoun that indicates to whom or for whom the action of a verb in a sentence is performed.

*Example:*

“It’s a family motto. Are you ready, Jerry? I want to make sure you’re ready, brother. Here it is: *Show **me** the money.*”

(Rod Tidwell to Jerry McGuire in *Jerry McGuire*, 1996)

### 15. Interrogative Sentence

A sentence that asks a question.

*Example:*

“**What is the name of the Lone Ranger’s nephew’s horse?**”

(Mr. Parker in *A Christmas Story*, 1983)

### 16. Noun

The part of speech that is used to name a person, place, thing, quality, or action and can function as the subject or object of a verb, the object of a preposition, or an appositive.

*Example:*

“**Waiter**, there is too much **pepper** on my **paprikash.**”

(Harry Burns in *When Harry Met Sally*, 1989)

### 17. Passive Voice

A verb form in which the grammatical subject receives the verb’s action. Contrast with active voice.

*Example:*

“Any attempt by you to create a climate of fear and panic among the populace **must be deemed by us** an act of insurrection.”

(First Elder to Jor-El in *Superman*, 1978)

### 18. Predicate

One of the two main parts of a sentence or clause, modifying the subject and including the verb, objects, or phrases governed by the verb.

*Example:*

“I **don’t ever remember feeling this awake.**”

(Thelma Dickinson in *Thelma and Louise*, 1991)

### 19. Prepositional Phrase

A group of words made up of a preposition, its object, and any of the object’s modifiers.

*Example:*

“A long time ago, my ancestor Paikea came **to this place on the back of a whale.** Since then, **in every generation of my family**, the first born son has carried his name and become the leader **of our tribe.**”

(Paikea, in *The Whale Rider*)

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### 20. Pronoun

A word that takes the place of a noun.

*Example:*

“A census taker once tried to test **me**. **I** ate **his** liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.”  
(Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1991)

### 21. Sentence

A word or (more commonly) a group of words that expresses a complete idea. Conventionally, a sentence includes a subject and a verb. It begins with a capital letter and concludes with a mark of end punctuation.

*Example:*

“**I don’t ever remember feeling this awake.**”  
(Thelma Dickinson in *Thelma and Louise*, 1991)

### 22. Subject

The part of a sentence that indicates what it is about.

*Example:*

“**I don’t ever remember feeling this awake.**”  
(Thelma Dickinson in *Thelma and Louise*, 1991)

### 23. Tense

The time of a verb’s action or state of being, such as past, present, and future.

*Example:*

“Years ago, you **served** [*past tense*] my father in the Clone Wars; now he **begs** [*present tense*] you to help him in his struggle against the Empire.”  
(Princess Leia to General Kenobi in *Star Wars*, 1977)

### 24. Verb

The part of speech that describes an action or occurrence or indicates a state of being.

*Example:*

“**Send** this pestilent, traitorous, cow-hearted, yeasty codpiece to the brig.”  
(Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End*, 2007)

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