



BOUGHTON HEATH
ACADEMY



Grammar and Punctuation Guide for Parents 2016

Foreword from Steve Ellis and Lisa Williams



Thank you for taking the time to be interested about grammar! It is sometimes with reluctance that teachers begin lessons with the purpose of teaching children about front adverbials or subjunctive clauses because to some the creative soul of writing could be lost or missed. All of the teachers at Boughton Heath Academy firmly believe there is a balance in a love for reading and writing and ensuring children have an accurate understanding of grammar so that they may draft writing which demonstrates their creative talents.

The question many parents may ask is, 'Why do we teach grammar?' There are many points of view regarding the answer to this question. However, at Boughton Heath Academy we have been teaching grammar, spelling and the correct use of punctuation even before it was a government agenda.

There is no doubt about it: The use or misuse of grammar in speaking and in writing affects the clarity of writing for better or worse. Good grammar helps people communicate more effectively and can translate into doing better in school, getting the jobs we seek and clarifying our points of view. Good grammar teaches thinking skills and encourages logical thinking. It increases our vocabularies. And many feel strongly that learning grammar has a positive influence on the quality of our writing.

For success in today's world, the use of bad grammar can be annoying; to some, it is egregious. Grammatical errors on everything from letters to websites, from e-mails to interviews often make a poor impression and can cause the speaker or writer to lose a job opportunity or be judged either as poorly educated and careless.

However, having said that there is a balance and we would not subscribe to teaching grammar to the detriment of a child losing a love for writing because they were to concerned with ensuring the comma was correctly demarcating a subordinate and main clause. First and foremost children should enjoy writing, valuing the creation of a story for others to read and share.

Many parents have contacted school in the last 2 years to indicate that they feel they need to learn more themselves. At school grammar may not have been taught and much of the language is difficult to explain to their children. This booklet is our way of helping parents to support their children at home and ensure they can help school to improve their child's grammar. Thank you for your support and we hope you find this booklet clear and easy to use.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Ellis', written in a cursive style.

Many Thanks

Steve Ellis (Principal)

Lisa Williams

Parts of speech...

Words in the English language can be classified into **parts of speech** according to the function they perform in the sentence.

Verb: This expresses an action. It is a doing word. (to run, to love, to eat).

Verb tense – this tells us about time...“when the action happened”

Examples:

Past tense – He remembered the book;

Future tense – Next year I will go to Manor High School;

Present tense – I live in Oadby.

Imperative verbs: Give commands

Examples:

add the hot water, chop the cucumber, feed your hamster, stir the mixture.

Modal verbs: Express necessity or possibility.

Examples: must could should might

Noun: A thing or item...such as... a person, place or idea (table, Nikita, London, fear).

Concrete nouns are things you can touch or observe with your senses, e.g. chair, town, bicycle.

Abstract nouns are ideas or concepts, e.g. sadness, hatred, boredom;

Proper nouns are the names of specific things – individual things! The names of particular places, things and people are the most common examples of proper nouns , e.g. Harmeet, Leicestershire, January, Diwali, Monday;

Common nouns are just ordinary things, e.g. dog, city, month, boy, day, country.

Adjective: Tells you about a noun... describing words.

Examples:

The wooden table.

The sky was blue.

The hairy monkey

Adverb: Describes how a verb is done – when, where or how it happens; they often end in the suffix “- ly”.

Examples:

She ran quickly;

Matthew ate greedily ;

Pronoun — a word that stands in for a noun (I, he, she, it, they, we, you.)

Examples:

Bethany ran for the bus - can **be** ... She ran for the bus.

Preposition — a word to do with place or position - (to, under, behind, in, outside).

Conjunction — a word that connects together words, sentences, phrases, or clauses. It is sometimes called a connective – (and, or, so, then, therefore, however, because).

Examples:

Huzaifa fell over; however, he got up to come second in the race.

Shaniya stayed with her sheep because they were afraid of the foxes.

Interjection — a part of a sentence that stands alone and expresses a strong emotion or reaction – Ouch! Hello! What? Excuse me!

Determiner — a determiner is a word that introduces a noun, such as ... a/an, the, this, those, every, many)

The determiner the... is known as the **definite article** and the determiner a (or an)... as the **indefinite article**.

Examples:

a cat;

the cat;

this cat;

those cats;

every cat;

Possessive determiners — words like... my, our, your, his, her, its and their... are known as possessive determiners. They come before nouns and are sometimes known as **possessive pronouns**.

My leg hurts.

Aaron swapped **his** bike.

Paragraphing

The key point to take on board is that all written work needs paragraphs. As soon as you are writing an answer or a piece of more than a few sentences, you need to start considering paragraphs.

Paragraphs in non-fiction writing

You must have paragraphs to separate out the different ideas in your writing. Paragraphs should not just be random breaks in your work when you feel a gap is needed. They should clearly show where the steps in the ideas are. They show how you are organising your thinking across a whole text.

Introductions and conclusions have particular functions and should be separate paragraphs.

The introduction should lead the reader into your piece by giving an idea about what you are going to write about and why it is an interesting topic.

The introduction should not be vague; be specific and avoid just repeating words from the question or title.

The conclusion should give a clear summary of what you have said in your work, and should give the reader a clear idea of what they should go away thinking.

It is often a good idea to refer back to the introduction in your conclusion. Do not merely repeat the introduction or leave things unresolved.

Each paragraph should have the same basic structure

A topic sentence – summarises and introduces the idea of the paragraph. It is like a mini-introduction to your paragraph.

Detail/ development – sentences in the middle of the paragraph that give further explanation and take your ideas further

Rounding off – a sentence that draws the paragraph together.

Connectives: You should make regular use of connectives to join together ideas both within and between your paragraphs.

This will help show how your ideas link together and will make your work logical.

Connectives include: therefore, in contrast, because, however, on the one hand, on the other hand, thus, hence, although, in conclusion.

Paragraphs in narrative/ descriptive writing:

You also always need to use paragraphs when you are writing more creative pieces - descriptive writing or narrative (story) writing, for example.

In this type of writing, you can use the TIP ToP rule. This says that you should start a new paragraph for a **change of Time, Place, Topic or Person**.

In more creative pieces of work, you can also use very short paragraphs for effect and impact.

Other pieces of punctuation:

There are a number of other punctuation marks that you can use, and they can help add clarity, variety, and style to your work.

Brackets: These are sometimes called **parentheses**. They are used around parts of the sentence that give additional information that could be removed or is just as aside. Avoid overusing them.

Dashes: These can be used as follows:

Example:

The sweet shop (which you probably visited in the summer) opens today at noon.

In pairs, to separate information that is not essential to understanding the rest of the sentence (a bit like with brackets).

To show a break in a sentence where a comma, semicolon, or colon could also be used.

Example:

Thousands of people – like the ones you have seen on the film – are now at risk of serious famine.

Example:

One thing's certain – he still needs to hurry up.
Things have changed since last time we came – they have built a new swimming pool.

Dashes are especially common in informal writing, but it's probably best to avoid overusing them in formal writing – commas, semicolons, and colons can generally be used in their place.

Ellipsis: This is the proper name for a 'dot, dot, dot'. It is used when a sentence trails off, to give suspense, or to show that something is missing.

Example:

'What the...?' exclaimed Paul, as he saw what was happening.
But Laurie had always been afraid of dark places....

Exclamation mark: This shows that something is said with emotion or emphasis.

Example:

"What an amazing piece of work!" exclaimed Mrs Johnston.
"Goal!" roared Joseph as the ball hit the back of the net.

Sentences, phrases and clauses

What is a sentence?

A sentence is a group of words that make complete sense. It must contain a main verb and begin with a capital letter. It ends in a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark.

Breaking the rules for effect!

Sometimes in your writing you might find the need to break the rules to get an interesting effect to your work. It should always be clear that this is being done for effect and not an error in your work.

Examples:

The room was a complete bomb blast! UTTER CHAOS!

This was a soldier. A machine. A unit of fear!

It was a steady beating...thud, thud, thud! The rhythm of a heart.

What is a clause? A **clause** is a group of words containing a verb, which makes up part of a sentence.

Examples:

They arrived early because everyone was really excited.

= two clauses: 1. 'they arrived early' 2. 'because every was really excited.'

The man wanted to sneeze and he got his handkerchief out.

= two clauses: 1 'the man wanted to sneeze' 2 'and got his handkerchief out'

NOTE: every clause has a verb ... 'arrived', 'excited', 'wanted', 'got out'

Types of clause. Clauses can be put into two types:

Independent or main clauses – these make sense on their own and have a subject and a verb in them;

Examples:

Independent or main clauses:

It was hot

I eat a lot of bread

This tree is very old

Subordinate clauses – these need another part of the sentence to make sense.

Types of sentences: We classify sentences according to the number and types of clauses that are present. There are three types of sentences.

Simple sentences: These have just one main clause in them.

Examples:

The shops are on the other street.
We often go to France.

Compound sentences: These have two or more clauses in them, all of them being main clauses. The clauses are joined together by **conjunction** like **and, or, so** and **but**

Examples:

The rain has been heavy and we have decided not to go out.
The child in the green shirt won the race but, her horse was bigger than the rest.

Complex sentences: These have two or more clauses in them and are a mixture main clauses and subordinate clauses.

Examples:

If you'd like to learn to play guitar this term, you will need to sign up for lessons.
Teachers often spend whole evenings marking, even when they are very tired.

Phrases: A phrase is a small group of words that forms a meaningful part of a clause. There are several different types, as follows:

Noun phrase - A noun phrase is built around a single noun,

Verb phrase - A verb phrase is the verbal part of a clause.

Examples:

Noun - A vase of roses stood on the table.
Verb - I will be going to high school next year.

3. **There must be a comma, full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark at the end of a piece of speech. It should go before the speech mark.**

Example:

'Can I join you?' she asked.
'Wait there!' he called.
'You're running late,' he said.
'I thought you'd be ready by now.'

4. **If the speech follows where we find out about who is speaking, you should use a comma to introduce the piece of speech, before the first speech mark**

Example:

Luke replied, 'If you like.'

5. **If the direct speech is broken up by a speaker's name, you need a comma (or a question mark or exclamation mark) to end the first piece of speech and a full stop or another comma before the second piece (before the speech marks):**

Example:

'You're on to something,' he said. 'This isn't right.'
'Looking back,' she said, 'we could have done better.' 'Yes!' he cried. 'I can't believe we've done it!'

Punctuating speech

There are two ways of putting speech into your writing. The speaker's words can either be reported, or they can be quoted directly in what's called direct speech.

Reported speech:

In reported speech, the actual words are not usually quoted directly. They can be rephrased in your own words and there is no need for any extra punctuation.

Example:

The 156 pupils in the year said that the main reason for choosing a subject was that they thought they would do well in it.
The athletes said how pleased they had been to win medals.

Direct speech:

This is when you put the actual words that a person speaks into your writing. There are a number of rules to follow in setting out and punctuating.

1. The words that are actually spoken should be put in inverted commas.

Example:

'He's done really well, you know.'

You can use single inverted commas or double ones:

2. Whenever a new speaker says something, you need to start a new paragraph:

Example:

'He thinks it's a good idea,' said Toby.
'I think so too,' I replied.

Adjective phrase - An adjective phrase is built around an adjective.

Examples:

He's led a **very interesting** life.
A lot of the girls are **really keen** on football.

Adverbial phrase - An adverbial phrase is built round an adverb by adding words before and/or after it.

Examples:

The tortoise ran **very slowly**.
They wanted to leave the country **as fast as possible**.

Prepositional phrase - In a prepositional phrase the preposition always comes at the beginning.

Examples:

I wanted to live **near the sea**.

Capital letters

Capital letters at the start of sentences:

Every sentence should start with a capital letter. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Capital letters for proper nouns and

names: We give capital letters to any proper noun. This means the actual name of something or someone. We give capitals to all the main words that are part of the name.

Examples:

Harry Singh Flora;
Boughton Heath Academy;
Leicester;
Easter;

Capital letters for titles: We give capital letters to all the main words in titles, including in books, films, and pieces of work. Small words (such as of, the, a, an) are not given capitals unless they are the first word of the title.

Examples:

The History of Cheshire;
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory;
The Prince of Wales;
The Return of the Jedi;

Abbreviations: When you abbreviate a word, you should use capitals

Examples:

GCSE,
TV,
BBC.
LCFC

The pronoun 'I': Whenever you use the pronoun 'I' to represent yourself, you must use a capital. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Common confusions:

- **Common nouns used as names.** People are often tempted to write 'My Mum' or 'My Dog', thinking that, , it is a proper noun. However, 'mum' and 'dog' are not their names and so you should not use a capital letter. The exception to this is if or when the common noun is used as their name

Examples:

I loved the way that Mum was always laughing.
We named him Dog because we couldn't think of another name for him.

- **Importance.** Some people are tempted to use capital letters just to suggest that something is important.

Examples:

You must always do your Homework.
At the school, Football is a popular sport.

Colons

The colon has a number of functions:

To introduce an idea: The colon introduces an idea that is an explanation or continuation of the one that comes before the colon. The colon can be considered as a gateway inviting the reader to go on. You will see that you have some idea of what will come after the colon.

Examples:

You don't have much choice: you will need to re-do the work.
There is one food that I couldn't live without: pizza.

To introduce a list: You need to be careful doing this; many people assume that a colon always comes before a list but this is wrong. As above, the clause before the colon must make complete sense on its own.

Examples:

The cake contained some delicious ingredients: chocolate, syrup, butter, and hazelnuts.
The cake contained chocolate, syrup, butter, and hazelnuts.

Style: A colon can add emphasis and punch to an idea.

Examples:

The one thing we all love is success.
There is one thing we all love: success.

Semi Colons

The semicolon is a great punctuation mark; using it shows that you are a good writer. It will allow you to express your ideas and opinions with more subtlety and precision. We use it in the following ways:

In complicated lists: The semicolon can be used to sort out a complicated list containing many items, many of which themselves contain commas.

Example:

The meeting today was attended by Mr Ahmed, City Councillor, Dr Jones, the local doctor, Mrs Patel, a lawyer, and Jo Thomas, the Chair.



In a list like this where the 'items' are more than one word long, the semicolon can help make things a lot clearer:

The meeting today was attended by Mr Ahmed, City Councillor; Dr Jones, the local doctor; Mrs Patel, a lawyer and Jo Thomas, the Chair.

Separating closely-related independent clauses: The semicolon is also used to connect two closely related independent clauses.

Example:

Charlie always ate big meals; he got terribly hungry.



The two clauses here are closely connected but the link has not been made clear. They could have been separated by a full stop.

Charlie always ate big meals. He got terribly hungry.

They could have been connected by a conjunction.

Charlie always ate big meals, but he got terribly hungry.

If you are going to use a semicolon to connect two clauses, it is very important that the two clauses are both independent. That means that each clause has to be able to stand alone and make complete sense without the other, or in other words, that each part could be a sentence in its own right. If either clause cannot stand alone, a semicolon **cannot** be used.

Commas

The comma is a much misused piece of punctuation. This is partly because there are several different situations in which the comma is the correct piece of punctuation to use. The trick is to identify those situations so as not to use the comma in places where it really should not be.

The following are some of the situations in which a comma should be used:

To separate words in a list of three or more items:

I need to buy milk, bread, eggs and cheese.

To separate a subordinate clause from the main clause when the subordinate clause comes first in a sentence:

Use a comma to separate a subordinate clause at the start of a sentence from the main part of that sentence.

After being caught in the rain, Michael was lucky not to catch a terrible cold.

As the evening drew to a close, the children wandered home.

To separate parenthetical elements (asides) or subordinate clauses within a sentence:

A comma is used to set off subordinate clauses contained within main clauses. The subordinate clause (also known as an aside) is part of the sentence that can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence - it is just adding extra information.

Commas are used to separate out words or clauses that are separate from the main part of the sentence.

Commas are used to separate phrases and words that come before, within, or after another part of the sentence. As above, these words or phrases could be removed without changing the essential meaning of the sentence.

Examples:

In truth, there are a lot of houses for sale in Oadby

It is, have you noticed, too cold to sit outside.

Commas are used to separate dates and years, towns and counties etc.:

Examples:

His home was in Countesthorpe, Leicestershire.

My father was born on March 13, 1949.

Commas are used to separate several adjectives.

Examples:

The old, ramshackle, dilapidated house had a charm of its own.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used for several different functions.

The apostrophe of contraction:

One use of the apostrophe is in contracted words, which have been joined together and shortened with letters taken out. The apostrophe is used where a letter or letters has/have been taken out.

**Be careful when contracting 'would have' into 'would've' – a common mistake is to write 'would of' and you should avoid this.

Examples:

He is = he's

I am = I'm

They have = They've

It is = It's I would = I'd

The apostrophe showing possession:

The second use of the apostrophe is to show possession – that something belongs to someone or something else.

Examples:

He loved Madrid's winding streets. (The streets belong to Madrid).

I'm interested in Ravi's point of view. (The point of view belongs to Ravi).

The building's walls were well built. (The building belong to the building).

Tip: If you're not sure if an apostrophe of possession is needed, see if you can rearrange the phrase to include an 'of'. For example, Madrid's winding streets can be rearranged as 'the winding streets of Madrid', while Ravi's point of view can be rearranged as 'the point of view of Ravi'. If you can rearrange to include an 'of', then an apostrophe of possession is needed.

If the apostrophe is a plural ending in s, the apostrophe needs to come after the s

Examples:

The teacher was always losing her pupils' books. (There are many pupils who have books).

The childrens' meals were served in a bright and clean dining room. (There are many children).

I can never understand the boys' obsession with football. (There are many boys).

This also happens with names that end in s.

Examples:

James' shoes are in the corner.

Jesus' disciples included James and Matthew.

Mistakes with apostrophes

1. A very common mistake is to put apostrophes in every time a word ends in s even if there is no relationship of possession.

Examples

You can have pea's with your meal.

Market Harborough contain's lots of lovely old buildings and streets.

2. A second common mistake is to put the apostrophe in the wrong place for singular and plural words. This can completely change the meaning of the sentence.

Examples:

The pupil's uniform was very smart. (one pupil)

The pupils' uniform was very smart. (lots of pupils)

3. These words, its, his, hers, whose, theirs **do not carry possessive apostrophes** ;

Examples:

The cat likes its food.