

# Phrases

## What is a phrase?

A phrase is a group of related words (within a sentence) without both subject and verb. For example, He is laughing **at the joker**.

## Types of Phrases

A phrase functions as a noun, verb, adverb, adjective or preposition in a sentence. The function of a phrase depends on its construction (words it contains). On the basis of their functions and constructions, phrases are divided into various types *i.e. noun phrase, verb phrase, adverb phrase, adjective phrase, appositive phrase, infinitive phrase, participle phrase and gerund phrase*.

### 1. Noun Phrase

- A noun phrase consists of a noun and other related words (usually modifiers and determiners) which modify the noun.
- It functions like a noun in a sentence.
- A noun phrase consists of a noun as the head word and other words (usually modifiers and determiners) which come after or before the noun.
- The whole phrase works as a noun in a sentence.

#### Examples:

He is wearing <b>a nice red shirt</b> .	(as noun/object)
She brought a <b>glass full of water</b> .	(as noun/object)
<b>The boy with brown hair</b> is laughing.	(as noun/subject)
<b>A man on the roof</b> was shouting.	(as noun/subject)

- A sentence can also contain more noun phrases.  
For example: **The girl with blue eyes** bought **a beautiful chair**.

### 2. Prepositional Phrase

- A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition, an object of preposition (noun or pronoun) and may also consist of other modifiers.  
*e.g. on a table, near a wall, in the room, at the door, under a tree*
- A prepositional phrase starts with a preposition and mostly ends with a noun or pronoun. Whatever prepositional phrase ends with is called object of preposition. A prepositional phrase functions as an adjective or adverb in a sentence.

#### Examples:

1. A boy **on the roof** is singing a song. (As adjective)
2. The man **in the room** is our teacher. (As adjective)
3. She is shouting **in a loud voice**. (As adverb)
4. He always behaves **in a good manner**. (As adverb)

### 3. Adjective Phrase

- An adjective phrase is a group of words that functions like an adjective in a sentence. It consists of adjectives, modifier and any word that modifies a noun or pronoun.
- An adjective phrase functions like an adjective to modify (or tell about) a noun or a pronoun in a sentence.

#### **Examples:**

He is wearing **a nice red** shirt. (modifies shirt)  
The girl **with brown hair** is singing a song. (modifies girl)  
He gave me a glass **full of water**. (modifies glass)  
A boy **from America** won the race. (modifies boy)

- *Prepositional phrases and participle phrases* also function as adjectives so we can also call them adjective phrases when they function as adjective. In the above sentence “The girl with brown hair is singing a song”, the phrase “with brown hair” is a prepositional phrase but it functions as an adjective.

### 4. Adverb Phrase

- An adverb phrase is a group of words that functions as an adverb in a sentence. It consists of adverbs or other words (preposition, noun, verb, modifiers) that make a group with works like an adverb in a sentence.
- An adverb phrase functions like an adverb to modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb.

#### **Examples:**

He always behaves **in a good manner**. (modifies verb behave)  
They were shouting **in a loud voice**. (modifies verb shout)  
She always drives **with care**. (modifies verb drive)  
He sat **in a corner of the room**. (modifies verb sit)  
He returned **in a short while**. (modifies verb return)

- A prepositional phrase can also act as an adverb phrase. For example in above sentence “He always behaves in a good manner”, the phrase “in a good manner” is a prepositional phrase but it acts as adverb phrase here.

### 5. Verb Phrase

- A verb phrase is a combination of main verb and its auxiliaries (helping verbs) in a sentence.

#### **Examples:**

He **is eating** an apple.  
She **has finished** her work.  
You **should study** for the exam.  
She **has been sleeping** for two hours.

- According to *generative grammar*, a verb phrase can consist of main verb, its auxiliaries, its complements and other modifiers. Hence it can refer to the whole predicate of a sentence.

**Example.** You **should study for the exam**.

### 6. Infinitive Phrase

- An infinitive phrase consist of an infinitive (**to + simple form of verb**) and modifiers or other words associated to the infinitive. An infinitive phrase always functions as an adjective, adverb or a noun in a sentence.

#### **Examples:**

He likes **to read books**. (As noun/object)

**To earn money** is a desire of everyone. (As noun/subject)  
He shouted **to inform people about fire**. (As adverb, modifies verb shout)  
He made a plan **to buy a car**. (As adjective, modifies noun plan)

## 7. Gerund Phrase

- A gerund phrase consists of a gerund (**verb + ing**) and modifiers or other words associated with the gerund. A gerund phrase acts as a noun in a sentence.

### Examples:

I like **writing good essays**. (As noun/object)  
She started **thinking about the problem**. (As noun/object)  
**Sleeping late in night** is not a good habit. (As noun/subject)  
**Weeping of a baby** woke him up. (As noun/subject)

## 8. Participle Phrase

- A participle phrase consists of a present participle (**verb + ing**), a past participle (verb ending in **-ed** or other form in case of irregular verbs) and modifiers or other associate words. A participle phrase is separated by commas. It always acts as an adjective in a sentence.

### Examples:

The kids, **making a noise**, need food. (modifies kids)  
I received a letter, **mentioning about my exam**. (modifies letter)  
The table, **made of steel**, is too expensive. (modifies table)  
We saw a car, **damaged in an accident**. (modifies car)

## 9. Absolute Phrase

- Absolute phrase (also called nominative phrase) is a group of words including a noun or pronoun and a participle as well as any associated modifiers.
- Absolute phrase modifies (give information about) the entire sentence. It resembles a clause but it lack a **true finite verb**. It is separated by a comma or pairs of commas from the rest sentence.

### Examples:

He looks sad, **his face expressing worry**.  
She was waiting for her friend, **her eyes on the clock**.  
John is painting a wall, **his shirt dirty with paint**.