

PHRASES

NOUN PHRASES

A noun phrase contains a noun and any modifiers (including determiners, adjectives, and adverbs).

AS SUBJECTS

The subject of a sentence may be a noun phrase. Furthermore, noun phrases may serve as subjects, objects, and complements.

Example:

The perfect day is Monday.

The silly dog ran after the postal worker.

The beautiful butterfly landed gracefully.

AS OBJECTS

When a noun phrase follows an action verb (e.g., jump, run, throw, etc.), typically it serves as the object.

Example:

I drove an old, crappy blue Chevy Nova.

I swam the muddy banks of the Mississippi.

AS COMPLEMENTS

When a noun phrase follows a non-action verb (a linking verb or a sensory verb), typically it serves as the subject complement.

Example:

David is a wonderful driver.

Mark is a deceitful liar.

ADJECTIVE PHRASES

DEFINITION

An adjective phrase is a group of words connected to the adjective.

Typically, the adjective is placed in front of the word it modifies:

Example:

She is very beautiful.

Very = adverb

Beautiful = adjective

Other times, the words are placed after the adjective to modify it much in the same way.

Example:

The dog is dry enough to put in the car.

Dry= adjective
Enough= adverb

VERB PHRASES

A verb phrase contains the main verb and any auxiliary (or helping) verbs. A verb by itself is simply a verb. However, when the verb is followed by or preceded by an auxiliary verb (or helping verb), a verb phrase is formed. Thus,

A MAIN VERB + AN AUXILIARY VERB = A VERB PHRASE

Auxiliary Verbs include:

Am
Has
Have
Had
Be
Being
Been
Are
Was
Were
Do
Does
Did
Will
Shall
May
Can
Ought
Should
Might

Example:

William has been sitting on the couch.
Jack will be watching the game.
Norman had hit his head yesterday.
Mary ought to catch the train.

QUESTIONS & VERB PHRASES

In questions, the verb phrase may be much more difficult to find, since they may be split between nouns, pronouns, determiners, and other words.

Example:

Are the dogs going to be placed in the back of the truck?
What have you done today?

ADVERB PHRASES

A group of words fixed around an adverb.

Example:

John walked very awkwardly.

The tiger stalked its prey very quietly.

Words may precede or follow the main adverb in an adverb phrase.