Exploring the English Language

Exploring the English Language:

An Introduction to Structure-Based Writing

By

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and Owen G. Mordaunt

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-0364-0397-1
ISBN (13): 978-1-0364-0397-3

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to heartily thank Dr. Sarah Osborn, Lecturer and Graduate Faculty in the English Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha at Omaha, Nebraska, USA, for her critique and evaluation of the manuscript. Her helpful suggestions have greatly aided us in the revisions of this textbook. In addition, we appreciate her willingness to write the Introduction to this book.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the text is to introduce you, our reader, to the broad strokes of English grammar as a tool for communicating more clearly. Ideally, understanding how *your* readers will interpret your message will allow you to craft it more effectively. In fact, as you become more familiar with the book, you will explore exactly how important it is to know the rules of English grammar, so that when you break them, it is because you truly understand when, how, and why to break them *intentionally*, not by accident or through misunderstanding. This text provides you with a comprehensive look at the grammatical concepts you need to know to make sure your meaning is understood by your readers precisely as you intended.

Throughout this text, your expert-yet-approachable authors introduce you to the vast complexity of the English language, exploring the components of structure-based writing that you need to know and master to use the language effectively. Perhaps it is more accurate to describe what the authors really set out to accomplish here in this book is to lead you on a linguistic journey, first preparing you for your trip by beginning with broad classes of words, then taking your hand as they guide you along the vital but increasing complex path to producing grammatically correct sentences, and, along the way, avoiding ensnarement by non-sentences; meandering down paths with verbals, agreement, and modifiers; and completing quests in time, negation, and questioning. As every expedition must come to an end, so does this text, with an appropriate stopping place: punctuation, accentuating how our choices lead our readers to understand our desired meaning.

Along your pilgrimage to more grammatically correct written language production, while the authors assist you in using English as an effective tool for writing, they also set out to make you laugh, encourage you to keep trekking on, and celebrate your hard work. They guide you via rich linguistic descriptions, supported by ample, carefully-crafted examples,

and as in all adventures, together you encounter a delightful cast of characters, who join alongside you, offering a pleasant contextualization of all concepts you encounter. You meet the self-indulgent Bartholomew Wickerbottom III, and his neighbor, the nostalgic Hortensia Whiskerton, along with her at times problematic flock of chickens, to name a few, and they stay with you, helping you create memorable moments of your time with this book.

To ensure that they are supporting your adventures in English writing, the authors not only provide you with the instructional material in each chapter that you need to make your written English grammatically correct but also with bountiful opportunities to apply all you are learning along the way. They provide engaging exercises, all directly related to the content of the book chapters, that offer authentic practice to ensure you are in fact mastering these important rules of grammar. Before you embark on each practice set, the authors supportively remind you of what you have learned so far that you will need to successfully complete the questions, and in the end, you will be able to see clearly all that you have learned as you have boldly and bravely taken on in your continued exploration of the English language.

This introduction acts as your map for your next great adventure. It is now your time, brave learner, to prepare your supplies. Find your trusty pencil, sharpened and ready to annotate, a highlighter or two, and your beloved bookmark, ready to help you find your place as you work through this exceptional text. Keep your goal in mind: clear, effective English writing…and more than anything, enjoy the journey on which you are about to embark. You are in good hands.

—Sarah Faltin Osborn

CHAPTER ONE

WORD CLASSES

The Sentence

A sentence is the expression of a complete thought. There are always exceptions, but generally the simplest sentence has what is called a *subject* and a *verb*, like the sentence "I walk." Here, "I" is the subject and "walk" is the verb. The next level of complexity is a sentence with a *subject*, a *verb*, and an *object*, like the sentence "I eat bread." The verb, "eat," is the action. The subject, "I," performs the action. The object, "bread," is acted upon. Again, we will explore these terms, and others, in the following sections.

Word Classes

In order to begin a conversation about writing, we will have to agree on the vocabulary we will be using. The "metalanguage," or the language we use to talk about language, is how we can describe the mechanics of writing. Everyone uses the wrong word sometimes or uses a word the wrong way. If someone uses a word incorrectly, how can you tell them if they do not know what type of word it is or the rules for how it can be used? A writer has to know these terms in order to think, or read, or learn about writing. The most basic set of terms that you want to understand as a beginning writer are the parts of speech.

Word classes, traditionally known as parts of speech, are categories, or types of words, and they have characteristics that identify them and expected ways they can be used. If you can think of writing as a game, then words would be the pieces and grammar would be the rules that say how they can be used. The main categories are nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. Since every word that exists falls under one of these categories, you can imagine that there is a lot of variation within each. A solid understanding of these

words, however, is a foundation that allows us to begin a conversation about writing.

Nouns

We use words as symbols that we understand to represent something in the real world, like the way the word "car" represents something you drive or the way your name is a word that identifies you. At its most basic, a noun is any word that represents a person, place or thing. The word "chair" is our symbol for a *thing* that you sit on in the same way that the word "home" is how we identify the *place* where you live. Since a "chair" is a thing and "home" is a place, we know that they are both nouns. More specifically, "chair" and "home" are what we call **common nouns**. You can think of common nouns as general terms that, in English, we do not capitalize.

Proper nouns, on the other hand, are more specific. The name of a good friend, "Bartholomew Wickerbottom III," and the place where he lives, "Inavale, Nebraska," are examples of proper nouns. As you probably noticed, in English we capitalize the first letter of proper nouns.

Nouns can be singular or plural, they can be one word or a noun phrase, and in English they can be used in the *nominative*, *objective*, or *possessive case*. Those three terms are examples of more metalanguage, and many people would be unfamiliar with them, even competent writers. When we talk about the nominative case, we are talking about the subject of the sentence. You might have guessed that the objective case would be when the noun is the object of the sentence. The possessive case is when the person, place, or thing has ownership of something, and it is often indicated by an apostrophe and an "s" after the word, as in "*Bartholemew's* neighbor is Hortensia." Of course, there are other things that we will want to know about nouns and the ways that we can use them later on, but this is a good starting point.

Pronouns

If a noun is a symbol that represents a person, place or thing, then a pronoun is a symbol that represents a noun. If we sit down to tell you a story about our friend Bartholomew Wickerbottom III, and the terrible

trouble that he had with his neighbor, Hortensia Whiskerton, when her free-range chickens broke into his third-story apartment, ransacked his pantry, and refused to leave for two and a half weeks, it is obviously going to take some time. If we have to say "Bartholomew Wickerbottom III" every time we want to reference Bartholomew Wickerbottom III in the story, and do the same for Hortensia Whisker ton and her free-range chickens, each of whom is named after one of Hortensia's ancestors, then the story would take many times longer to tell and be too repetitive to be enjoyable. Pronouns make storytelling faster, and there are several different kinds.

Personal pronouns are determined by the nature of the word they represent. If the noun is gendered male, singular, and in the nominative case, then the pronoun that references it will have those same characteristics. If we wanted to tell you something about Bartholomew Wickerbottom III, for example, we would say that "*he* spends most of *his* time making snow-globes of famous scenes from literature." (You can see we included a rough sketch of a snow globe, in case you are unfamiliar with that art-form. The ball is filled with clear liquid, and when you shake it, free-floating material clouds the whole sphere. When you stop shaking, that material settles slowly back to the bottom in such a way that it appears to be snowing inside the sphere.) From this, you would know that Bartholomew is one person whose gender is male. In situations where you are unsure of the proper pronoun to use, it is generally acceptable to use the third-person plural, "they," to refer to people. Here is a table of the personal pronouns you can use in different situations.

These are the singular forms

Nominative	Objective	Possessive
I	Me	Mine
You	You	Yours
She, He, It	Her, Him, It	Hers, His, Its

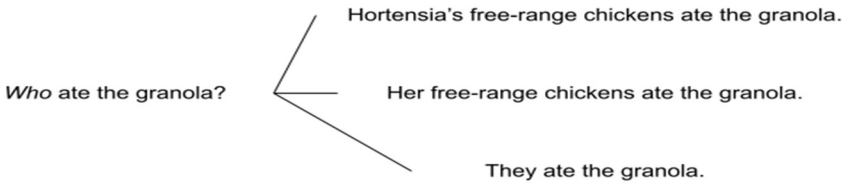
These are the plural forms

Nominative	Objective	Possessive
We	Us	Ours
You	You	Yours
They	Them	Theirs

Demonstrative Pronouns are generally used to indicate a thing or a group of things. Demonstrative pronouns include “this,” “that,” “these,” and “those.” As pronouns, these words are used alone, like when someone looks at several bags of granola in their pantry and thinks, “*These* are mine.” Another example would be when a chicken looks at a bag of granola in someone else's pantry and thinks, “I want *that*.”

Indefinite pronouns, as the name suggests, do not reference particular people, places, or things. They are words like “anybody,” “everyone,” and “nobody,” for people; “somewhere,” “everywhere,” and “nowhere,” for places; and “something,” “everything,” and “nothing,” for things. This is not an exhaustive list.

Interrogative pronouns like “who,” “which,” and “what” ask questions that can be answered with nouns or other pronouns. For example, the question “*Who* ate the granola?” can be answered in several different ways.



Reflexive pronouns end with “self,” as in the word “myself,” or with “selves,” like the word “themselves.” We use them as the object in situations when the object of a sentence is also the subject. This concept is more clearly explained with examples.

Singular	**Plural**
I wash *myself.*	We defend *ourselves*.
You love *yourself.*	You endanger *yourselves*.
She controls *herself.*	They like *themselves*.
He smells *himself.*	
It fixes *itself.*	

Notably, from the perspective of the writer, reflexive pronouns rescue a person from having to say "Bartholomew Wickerbottom III threw Bartholomew Wickerbottom III at the door, but it would not budge. The free-range chickens had barricaded the free-range chickens securely inside the pantry." Thanks to reflexive pronouns; we can say "Bartholomew Wickerbottom III threw himself at the door, but it would not budge. The free-range chickens had barricaded themselves securely inside the pantry."

Relative pronouns stand in for nouns we know very little about. Unfortunately, we do not mean that to sound mysterious. There is no list of phantom nouns that somehow defy our attempts to describe them. If you know one feature by which you can identify a person, place, or thing, you use that feature with a relative pronoun to replace the mysterious noun. This is another group that might be more clearly explained with examples:

- Who - You want to reference a specific person, but the only thing you know about them is that they ate the last croissant - "I am looking for the person *who* ate the last croissant."
- Whom - The mail carrier explaining that you cannot have any of the packages addressed to other people, without naming those people - "Sadly, these packages must be given to the people to *whom* they are addressed."
- Which - To reference one inanimate object - "The cranberry-orange scone, *which* was the last scone, was the best."

- What - When you really cannot remember the name of your favorite style of pliers - “Oh, this is really going to bug me! It is right on the tip of my tongue. *What* were they called?”
- That - For when you want to reference a critically-acclaimed movie, but you cannot remember the title - “The title was something weird, but it was the one *that* won all of the awards.”

As we slowly learn about the elements we can use to build a sentence, remember that only a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun can act as a *subject* or an *object*. As with nouns, there is much more to be learned about pronouns and how they can be used. We will certainly revisit them, but this is a good introduction.

Adjectives

So far, we know that nouns are words that reference people, places, or things, and we know that pronouns can be used to reference nouns. The words that we use to describe both nouns and pronouns, we call adjectives, and they are one way that people add depth and vibrancy to their writing.

Adjectives are the difference between “Chickens,” and “Hortensia Whiskerton’s fierce and warlike free-range chickens.” Sometimes a writer will use one word to describe something, like in the sentence “The chickens waited for a *dark* night.” Sometimes an adjective is made up of more than one word, like when I say “the night that they attacked was *dark as pitch*.” This is called an **adjective phrase**. We will discuss several types of adjectives here, but there are many, and this list is not exhaustive.

Descriptive adjectives are the most common type of adjective. They simply identify a trait or characteristic of the person, place, or thing that they describe. If you ever talk about a *slow* runner, or a person with *giant* ears and a *bad* haircut, then you are using descriptive adjectives, and maybe you should be a little nicer.

Comparative adjectives, as the name suggests, describe one person, place, or thing by comparing it to another person, place or thing. Actually, the phrase “*dark as pitch*” is a comparative adjective phrase, but comparative adjectives do not have to be phrases. “Bigger” and “smarter” are also comparative adjectives that I would use to describe Hortensia’s

birds, to tell you how they compare to other birds. The list of comparative adjectives is long, but they are not difficult to spot, and you probably already know many of them already.

Superlative adjectives are similar to comparative adjectives. If a comparative adjective can tell you that one chicken is *angrier* than other chickens, a superlative adjective would identify the *angriest* chicken. If a characteristic can be expressed in a range, like the range from least angry to most angry, then you use superlative adjectives to identify the people, places, and things at the extreme ends of the range.

Compound adjectives are necessarily adjective phrases. A compound adjective is made up of more than one word, often separated by hyphens, that work together to describe something. I would use a compound adjective to tell you "The leader of the chickens had a *larger-than-life* personality."

Possessive adjectives are the possessive forms of nouns and pronouns that show ownership of the noun or adjective that they describe. For example, when we use "Hortensia" or "she" as a subject, they are acting as a proper noun and a pronoun. When we use "Hortensia" or "her" as an object, the first one is still a proper noun and the second one is still a pronoun. They become adjectives when I tell you that "*Hortensia's* chickens live in *her* apartment." In each case I am using the possessive form of the word to tell you something about another word. "Hortensia's" describes the chickens and "her" describes the apartment.

Demonstrative adjectives are similar to possessive adjectives. These are also words that can function as pronouns, but because of the way they are used, they become adjectives. While a demonstrative pronoun stands on its own to take the place of a noun, a demonstrative adjective is used to identify one thing out of a group or differentiate one group from another. For example, the word "that" is a pronoun when my friend Bartholomew hears the clickety-clack of chickens in the hallway outside his door and wonders, "What was *that*?" However, the same word is functioning as an adjective when he whispers, "I hope I locked *that* door." In the second example, the word "that" is identifying one door specifically from all the other doors.

Interrogative adjectives ask for specificity. We know that Bartholomew has a favorite snow-globe, for example. How could he not?

To identify it, we would use an interrogative adjective to ask him, "*Which* snow-globe is your favorite?"

It may not always be obvious, but interrogative adjectives ask for an answer that comes from a range of possible answers that is limited by the question. Sometimes that range is quite large, like the range of possible answers to the question, "*What* song would make the best theme song for the tragic story of an artist losing his home to a platoon of poultry?" Sometimes the range is smaller, as it would be for the question, "*Whose* chickens are these?" For any response to be considered reasonable, the answer to the first question would have to be one of Bartholemew's snow-globes. Hypothetically, the range of possible answers for the second question includes every song ever written, but that is the limitation imposed by the question. The answer to the third question, I suppose, could be pulled from a list of every person who owns chickens, but everyone knows that those are Hortensia's free-range chickens.

Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns. They describe a person, place, or thing by connecting it to a specific person or place. For example, Hortensia is a woman from the United States, so she is an *American* woman. Almost every story about her chickens is full of betrayal and intrigue, so they are all *Shakespearean* dramas.

We want to remind you that we have not talked about every different kind of adjective here. As with most things, there will always be more for you and us to discover about adjectives.

Verbs

We have talked a little bit about the basic elements that make up a sentence. You will remember that, along with a subject and an object, the verb is one of those key components. Generally, a verb will fall into one of two categories. The first kind of verb is a word that refers to an action, as in the sentence, "Francois Delacroix *solves* problems." The second kind of verb refers to a state of being, as in the sentence, "Francois Delacroix *is* a world-renowned negotiator." The first kind of verb tells you what the subject is doing and the second one tells you something about the subject.

The verb "to solve" is *conjugated* in third person, present tense. Conjugations are the different forms that a verb can take to match

their subject and their *tense*. You can think of "tense" as the time that an action takes place relative to the "setting," or the time that the sentence is expressed.

Here are the present tense conjugations of the verb "to solve."

To Solve	Singular	Plural
1st Person	I solve	We solve
2nd Person	You solve	You solve
3rd Person	She, He, It solves	They solve

The second verb, "to be," is a very important verb, which is also conjugated in the third-person, present tense. Here are the present tense conjugations of the verb "to be."

I am	We are
You are	You are
She, He, It is	They are

It probably will not come as a surprise to find out that, just like with the other types of words, there are many different kinds of verbs.

Infinitive verbs are not verbs, at least they are not used as verbs. You can think of them as the unconjugated forms of verbs, but they can actually function as adjectives and nouns in sentences. They can also function as *adverbs*, but we will discuss those later. The infinitive form of a verb is the form it takes for the first person, present tense with the word "to." For example, the infinitive of the verb "talk" is "to talk."

Gerunds, much like infinitives, are based on verbs, but are not verbs. "Quit" is a verb, certainly, like when Matthew, on his first day as a lion tamer, turned to the manager and said "I quit." You can turn it into a gerund, however, by adding "ing," and it will function as a noun. When

the alpha chicken looked at her flock dead in the eye and said, "*Quitting* is not an option," the gerund "quitting" was a noun and the subject of the sentence.

When we say "I *quit*," we have a noun and a verb. When we say "I quit *running*," we have a noun, a verb, and a gerund as a direct object. When Owen said to Matthew, "I quit *running with wild wolves*," we have a noun, a verb, and a gerund, which is now part of a noun phrase. Also, we can all agree that we have a pretty good decision, all things considered.

Action verbs are verbs that, appropriately enough, refer to actions. You can think of action verbs as things that we do with our bodies, our minds, or with objects. For example, when the stand-off had gone on for two weeks, Bartholomew *called* his old friend, Francois Delacroix, so he could *negotiate* a peaceful settlement. Most verbs are action verbs, actually. An action-packed story, like the tale of Inavale's chicken stand-off, is full of action verbs.

Speaking of the verb, "To Negotiate," this is how it changes based on its subject, or *conjugates* in the present tense.

I negotiate	We negotiate
You negotiate	You negotiate
He, She. It negotiated	They negotiate

You probably noticed that the other verb in this sentence, "To Call," is used in the past tense. Remember, this means that the action took place in the past relative to the expression of the sentence. This is how it is conjugated.

I called	We called
You called	You called
He, She, It, worked	They worked

Intransitive and Transitive verbs are categories that have to do with the behavior of a verb in a sentence. A transitive verb has an object, while an intransitive verb does not. You will remember that some complete thoughts can be expressed with just a subject and a verb. In those cases, and in any other case where the verb does not have a direct object, the verb would be intransitive. If the verb is transitive, then the sentence also has an object. Since some verbs can function in both ways, it is not the verb itself, but the way it is used that will identify it as transitive or intransitive.

For example, there are examples of both types in the statement, "After the chickens *took* control of the pantry, Bartholomew *tried* to reason with them. He *begged*. He *pleaded*. He *made* threats. Still, the chickens *stood* firm." If you identify the verb then you can identify the direct object if the sentence has one. This will tell you if the verb is transitive or intransitive.

In the first sentence, the verb is "to take" in the past tense. What did the chickens take? They took "control," which makes "control" the direct object, and makes "to take" a transitive verb. Here are the past tense conjugations of the verb "to take." You might notice some differences from other conjugations.

I took	We took
You took	You took
She, He, It took	They took

The next verb is "to try," also in the past tense. This verb can certainly be transitive. We could say "I remember the first time that I *tried* sushi." To know if it is transitive here, we have to determine if it has an object. What does Bartholomew try, then? He tries *to reason*. That is an infinitive verb functioning as a noun, so it qualifies as an object and we have a transitive verb. Here are the past-tense conjugations of the verb "to try." Try to spot anything that seems connected to other conjugations.

I tried	We tried
You tried	You tried
She, He, It tried	They tried

The next verb is “to beg” past-tense. Since this sentence only has a subject and a verb, we can be pretty confident that there is no object and that this is an intransitive verb. Here are the conjugations of the verb “to beg” in past tense.

I begged	We begged
You begged	You begged
She, He, It begged	They begged

The next verb, “to plead,” is also in the past-tense, and is also without an object. It must be an intransitive verb. Here are the past-tense conjugations of the verb “to plead.”

I pleaded	We pleaded
You pleaded	You pleaded
She, He, It pleaded	They pleaded

The verb “to make” is next, also in the past tense. Did Bartholomew make *something*? Yes. He made “threats,” which is a plural noun, and our direct object, so “to make” is a transitive verb. Here are the conjugations in the past-tense.

I made	We made
You made	You made
She, He, It made	They made

The last verb in the example is the third-person, plural, past-tense conjugation of "to stand. The question for us is whether or not the word "firm" is acting as a direct object. In fact, in this case, the word "firm" is describing the way that the chickens stood. It is not acting as a direct object, so "to stand" is an intransitive word in this case. Here are the conjugations of "to stand" in the past tense.

I stood	We stood
You stood	You stood
She, He, It stood	They stood

Stative verbs are verbs that reveal something about their subject. You will remember the verb "to be" from our introduction to verbs, as well as the last example of an intransitive verb, "to stand." Neither of those verbs, at least in those instances, described an action by the subject of the sentence. Instead, they describe a state of being or reveal something about the subject to the reader.

If a verb seems to tell you more about the subject of the sentence than it does about an action, then it is probably a stative verb. We would use stative verbs if we wanted to give you some background details about the characters in a story. For example, "Bartholomew Wickerbottom III will eventually respect his chicken enemies. Hortensia Whiskerton prefers her chickens to people. Francois Delecroix believes that every conflict is an opportunity." Each sentence tells you something about the character, rather than describing an action and furthering a plot.

You probably noticed that the first of these examples, "to respect," is in the future-tense. The sentence describes something in the

future, relative to the setting in which we express it. This change in tense is accomplished by using an **auxiliary verb**, "will." Other common auxiliary verbs include "do," "have," "be," and "can," and they work with the main verb to change the sentence in different ways. We will address auxiliary verbs in greater detail as we continue to explore verbs. These are the conjugations of the verb "to respect" in the future tense.

I will respect	We will respect
You will respect	You will respect
She, He, It will respect	They will respect

The second example is conjugated in the present tense. It describes Hortensia, and the way she feels about chickens, rather than any action. Here are the present tense conjugations of the verb "to prefer."

I prefer	We prefer
You prefer	You prefer
She, He, It prefers	They prefer

The third example, "to believe," reveals something about Francois Delacroix which is true in the moment it is revealed, making it present-tense. Be on the lookout for similarities in the conjugations.

I believe	We believe
You believe	You believe
She, He, It believes	They believe

Phrasal verbs are multi-word verbs. The English language has loads and loads of phrasal verbs. Generally, phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and an *adverb* or *preposition* that, when combined, do not have the same meaning as they would separately. As an example, consider the verb "run into." Alone, the verb "to run" can describe moving faster than a walk. The word "into" describes entering inside something. Neither word, on its own, suggests physically encountering something with force or seeing someone you know unexpectedly, yet that is how we interpret the phrasal verb "to run into."

It is worth noting that we can describe the process of moving faster than a walk to enter a space using the exact same phrase. As a matter of fact, it can happen in the same sentence. "The chickens ran into the pantry, slamming the door, and Bartholomew ran into the door, hurting his nose." Fortunately, they still conjugate according to the rules of the base verb.

I ran into	We ran into
You run into	You ran into
She, He, It ran into	They ran into

Modal verbs are special verbs that, like the auxiliary verbs from earlier, can change the feeling of a verb or a sentence. Hortensia Whiskerton used a few when she told Francois Delacroix, "I can see that you are a friend of Bartholomew. You may act as our negotiator if you feel that you can act as a neutral third-party." The words "can" and "may" are both modal verbs, along with "might," must," and "would," so you can see that Hortensia used two modals, and used one of them twice. What difference do the modals make?

The first instance, "can," does not functionally change the idea that Hortensia is expressing. Francois is a friend of Bartholomew, and Hortensia sees that. Rather it changes the feeling of the sentence. Hortensia is not narrating her own life, but letting Francois know that she is aware of his friendship with Bartholomew and that she took that into consideration when she decided that he could act as their negotiator. In the

second instance, the word “may” changes the function of the sentence from making an observation to granting permission. The third modal, “can,” again relates to ability, as it questions Francois’ ability to remain neutral.

Regular verbs are the reason that you probably noticed some similarities in the conjugations. A regular verb is one that follows a set pattern when it is conjugated for past tense. If the past-tense conjugation of a verb switches to end with “ed,” “d,” or “t,” then it is considered a regular verb.

We can find examples in the sentence, “The alpha chicken, Sophia Whiskerton, *wanted* the entire flock to understand the plan, so she *explained* it to them several times while they all listened.” The verbs “to want,” “to explain,” and “to listen” all add an “ed” in the past tense, so they would be considered regular verbs. Here are their past-tense conjugations.

I wanted	We wanted
You wanted	You wanted
She, He, It wanted	They wanted

I explained	We explained
You explained	You explained
She, He, It explained	They explained

I listened	We listened
You listened	You listened
She, He, It listened	They listened

Irregular verbs are the ones that do not follow the rule. Some change a lot, and some do not change at all in the past tense, but they do not follow the "ed," "d," or "t" rule of regular verbs. The verb "to be" is a hard one already, if you remember the present-tense conjugations from before, there are already three different forms.

I am	We are
You are	You are
She, He, It is	They are

In the past tense, we get two more, and they do not follow the regular process.

I was	We were
You were	You were
She, He, It was	They were

There are two more in the sentence, "Bartholomew *bought* all of his snow-globe supplies at Gerhardt von Hinterland's Art Barn and Craft Emporium, because he *knew* they always had exactly what he wanted."

These are the conjugations of the verb "to buy" in past-tense.

I bought	We bought
You bought	You bought
She, He, It bought	They bought

And these are the past-tense conjugations for "to know."

I knew	We knew
You knew	You knew
She, He, It knew	They knew

I am sure that you noticed that one verb in that sentence, "to want," is actually a regular verb because it ends with "ed."

I wanted	We wanted
You wanted	You wanted
She, He, It wanted	They wanted

The irregular verbs bring us to the end of our introduction to verbs. It is not, of course, all that there is to know about verbs. For example, there is one called a **linking verb** which we can only talk about when we delve into complements in another chapter. There is always more to learn about different tenses and the complexities of conjugation. This is a good beginning, however, and the time has come to address the next part of speech.

Adverbs

You will remember that a word that modifies a noun or a pronoun is called an adjective. Well, a word that modifies an adjective or a verb is called an adverb. Adverbs can also modify other adverbs. Adverbs are a way to add more detail to your writing. They can be single words, like when a person tells you that "Francois looked *quickly* from Bartholomew to Hortensia." They can also be phrases, like "Bartholomew ran, *quick like a bunny*, to answer the door." We know that Francois looked, and that Bartholomew ran. The adverbs give us more information on how they did those things.

If we already know that Bartholomew is a large man in his early 70's who eats French pastries for most of his meals, then using that adverb phrase, "quick like a bunny," also creates a funny image in the minds of your audience.

There is always more to know about the words and phrases that modify verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. We will certainly revisit them later on but understanding how the adverb functions in a sentence is a good foundation to build from.

Prepositions

If we think of a sentence as a very short story, then the preposition is the setting. We know that the basic function of a sentence can be carried by a noun and a verb. Adding another noun or a pronoun to act as a direct object can allow us to express more information. Using an adjective lets us create a more detailed picture of our nouns and pronouns. Using an adverb offers a better understanding of how an action takes place or further refines the detail of an adjective. Using a preposition allows us to tell the audience where or when an action happens.

A preposition like "in" or "after" gives spatial or temporal information that is vital to any story. When Bartholomew told Hortensia, "We can discuss that *afterwards*," the preposition "afterwards" tells us when the discussion will happen.

Very often prepositions are the first word in what is called a **prepositional phrase**. The prepositional phrase contains a preposition, a noun or pronoun that functions as an indirect object in the sentence, and any words that describe that noun or pronoun. This is the case when we say "Bartholomew guiltily handed his croissant to Francois."

"Bartholomew" is a proper noun and the subject of the sentence. "Handed" is the verb, which is modified by the adverb "guiltily." "Croissant" is a noun that is acting as the direct object of the verb, modified by the possessive pronoun "his." At his point we have an incomplete thought. To whom did Bartholomew give his pastry? The picture is completed by adding the prepositional phrase, "to Francois," where "to" is the preposition and "Francois" is the indirect object.

Prepositions and prepositional phrases are obviously important for storytelling. They give us a more complete picture. We will certainly revisit prepositions phrases further down the line, but for now we can move on.

Conjunctions

These are the words that allow us to stitch together complicated ideas or put together lists. We can use conjunctions to link words together, like when we tell the story of Bartholomew *and* Hortensia. We can use conjunctions to link phrases together, like when we tell you that Francois Delacroix was last seen eating a bologna sandwich *or* dancing the flamenco. Remember, "eating" and "dancing" are gerunds, so the conjunction is tying together two noun phrases. We can also use conjunctions to link **clauses**.

Clauses are going to require more exploration. For now, all that needs to be said is that clauses contain a subject and a verb, like a sentence. Unlike a sentence, which always expresses a complete and independent thought, a clause does not have to. If a clause can stand on its own, then it is an **independent clause**. If it cannot stand on its own, we call it a **dependent clause**.

There are a few different types of conjunctions. As with our other parts of speech, they can be identified by their function.

Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, or clauses that have equal weight in the sentence. In the sentence "We all know that chickens love two things, eating *and* wreaking havoc," the gerund "eating" and the noun phrase "wreaking havoc" are equally important. The conjunction "and" links them together. "Nor" and "so" are also coordinating conjunctions.

Correlative conjunctions also link equal parts of a sentence, but they work as pairs, unlike coordinating conjunctions. The sentence, "Bartholomew knew that *either* he would break the chickens' will *or* they would break his," uses a correlative conjunction. The construction of correlative conjunctions can change, but you can identify them by the way that they function.