

ENGLISH



PHRASES

What is a Phrase?

A **phrase** is a group of words put together to be used in a sentence. Phrases do not hold much value in themselves, but they become meaningful when used along with a noun.

Example: The injured man could not remember anything.

The phrase 'The injured man' does not explain much when written independently, but it adds meaning when used in a sentence.

Example: The swallow migrated towards the north when spring arrived.

The phrase 'The swallow' or 'towards the north' does not explain much when written independently, but they add meaning when they are used in a sentence.

Types of Phrases

Noun Phrase

A noun phrase (NP) is a phrase which has a noun as its head word. It usually performs the function of a subject or an object in a sentence. It is the most commonly occurring type of phrase. A pronoun can also be identified as a noun phrase in cases where it functions as the subject or object of a sentence.

Examples:

- *The old lady sat under the banyan tree.*
- *The little boy listened attentively to the stories she told.*
- *The two were not related by blood.*
- *They nevertheless shared a unique bond.*

Verb Phrase

Similar to a noun phrase, a verb phrase (VP) uses a verb as its head word. It always performs the function of a predicate in a sentence. A single verb can also be called a phrase if it functions as a predicate of any sentence.

Example:

- *His parents had been waiting impatiently for their guest to arrive.*
- *This letter was posted a few days before he left for the U.S.*
- *The TC with the tie checked every passenger's ticket.*
- *The little frog dreamed of ruling the entire jungle.*

Adjective Phrase

An adjective phrase (AjP), just like an adjective, modifies or describes the noun in a sentence. It may occur before or after a noun in a sentence. In cases where it occurs after the main verb and in the absence of a noun following it, it stands independently as a complement (C) in the sentence.

Example: A **very tiny ray** emitted through the crack.

In the above sentence, '**ray**' is the noun and 'very tiny' describes the size of the light; therefore, it is the adjective phrase functioning as a **modifier**.

Let us look at some more examples of the same kind.

- The **crispy snacks** were loved by all.
- The performer wore **tattered clothes**.
- She bought a **very expensive watch** for her father.
- Her travelling ticket is kept in the **orange bag**.

2. The **pattern** she chose for her dress was **very beautiful**.

In the above sentence, the phrase '**very beautiful**' occurs after the verb 'was' and is not followed by the noun it describes, i.e. '**pattern**'; therefore, it is the adjective phrase functioning as a **complement** in the sentence.

Let us look at some more examples of the same kind.

- The **candidate** was **too smart** for his own good.
- Everyone agreed that **her performance** was **stunning**.
- The **butter** added to the cake was **too salty**.

Adverb Phrase

An adverb phrase (AvP) is a group of words used in a sentence to describe the predicate or the verb phrase in it.

Like adverbs, they answer the questions How, Where Why, When etc.

Examples:

- The candidate **answered** the questions **with confidence**. (*How?*)
- We **were waiting** for our friend **outside the theatre**. (*Where?*)
- The red t-shirts have to be distributed **tomorrow morning**. (*When?*)