

The Phrase

5a. A **phrase** is a group of related words that is used as a single part of speech and that does not contain both a verb and its subject.

VERB PHRASE has been painting [This word group has no subject.]

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE for the signal [This word group has no subject or verb.]

INFINITIVE PHRASE to finish your chores [This word group has no subject or verb. *To finish* is an infinitive, not a main verb.]

NOTE If a word group has both a subject and a verb, it is not a phrase.

EXAMPLES Jason has been painting [This word group has a subject, *Jason*, and a verb, *has been painting*. It is not a phrase.]

while she waited for the signal [This word group has a subject, *she*, and a verb, *waited*. It is not a phrase.]

EXERCISE A Identify each of the following word groups as a phrase or not a phrase. On the lines provided, write *P* for *phrase* or *NP* for *not a phrase*.

Examples *P* 1. to be an architect [This word group has no subject or verb.]

 NP 2. I like food [This word group has a subject and a verb.]

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. my friends enjoyed the school
carnival [Does this word group have
a subject and a verb?] | _____ 10. skating at the park |
| _____ 2. to your music teacher [Does this
word group have a subject and a verb?] | _____ 11. lost in the snow |
| _____ 3. on the table | _____ 12. I enjoy adventure stories |
| _____ 4. after I fed the rabbits this morning | _____ 13. is she joining our class |
| _____ 5. to memorize your lines | _____ 14. for the long weekend |
| _____ 6. when you found my sunglasses | _____ 15. will be visiting |
| _____ 7. David should be helping us | _____ 16. that makes sense |
| _____ 8. to play chess | _____ 17. in front of the curtain stood Jeremy |
| _____ 9. he found a tiny lizard | _____ 18. will you lend me a pencil |
| | _____ 19. has worked |
| | _____ 20. Nick and Tim could not have been
more helpful |

REMINDER ▶ Phrases act the same way that single words do within sentences.

EXAMPLES Jason **has been painting**. [The phrase *has been painting* acts as the verb and tells something about *Jason*.]

She waited **for the signal**. [The phrase *for the signal* acts as an adverb and modifies the verb *waited*.]

Don't forget **to finish your chores**. [The phrase *to finish your chores* acts as a noun and tells what not to forget.]

EXERCISE B Identify each of the following underlined word groups as a phrase or not a phrase. Write *P* for *phrase* or *NP* for *not a phrase* on the line provided.

Examples *P* 1. The Simpson children, Darrell and his sister Heather, run in the park on weekends. [This word group does not have a subject or a verb. It is a phrase.]

 NP 2. Protecting its young, the squirrel chased the cat away. [This word group has a subject, *squirrel*, and a verb, *chased*. It is not a phrase.]

_____ 21. That should have been done before class. [Does this word group have a subject and a verb?]

_____ 22. Her mother, an accountant with a technical company, helps our club, Digital Dabblers.
[Does this word group have a subject and a verb?]

_____ 23. The children had found a huge cardboard box and were making a fort.

_____ 24. Standing on the hill, we saw fireworks lighting up the sky.

_____ 25. We study and protect these historic sites.

_____ 26. Students should be studying now.

_____ 27. A large owl flew off into the night.

_____ 28. To train the best chefs is our purpose.

_____ 29. The school computer lab has a new digital photography program.

_____ 30. Willis wanted to run for class president.

The Prepositional Phrase

5b. A **prepositional phrase** includes a preposition, a noun or pronoun called the *object of the preposition*, and any modifiers of that object.

EXAMPLES on Tuesday afternoon [The preposition is *on* and the object of the preposition is *afternoon*. *Tuesday* modifies *afternoon*.]
 with him [The preposition is *with* and the object of the preposition is *him*.]
 in addition to San Antonio [The preposition is *in addition to* and the object of the preposition is *San Antonio*.]

NOTE A preposition may have more than one object.

EXAMPLE with **him** and **me**. [Both *him* and *me* are objects of the preposition *with*.]

EXERCISE A Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

Example 1. Will you be attending the play on Thursday or Friday? [The preposition is *on* and the objects of the preposition are *Thursday* and *Friday*.]

1. Snowflakes swirled around my family. [Which word group begins with a preposition and ends with an object of the preposition?]
2. Your estimate was right on the mark.
3. Far into the night they worked.
4. Mrs. Thomas, do you have a book about stars and planets?
5. Someone with a camcorder could tape the show.

Adjective Phrases

Like all phrases, a prepositional phrase acts as a single part of speech. Prepositional phrases can act as adjectives or as adverbs.

5c. A prepositional phrase that modifies a noun or a pronoun is called an **adjective phrase**.

Like an adjective, an adjective phrase tells *what kind* or *which one*.

ADJECTIVES a **Persian** rug [The adjective *Persian* tells what kind of rug.]

this rug [The adjective *this* tells which rug.]

ADJECTIVE PHRASES a rug **from Persia** [The adjective phrase *from Persia* tells what kind of rug.]

the rug **in the front room** [The adjective phrase *in the front room* tells which rug.]

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EXERCISE B Underline the adjective phrase in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** The post office building in our town is seventy-five years old. [The word group *in our town* tells which post office building.]
- The paragraph after this one explains everything. [Which word group tells which paragraph?]
 - Jered tied the laces of his shoes.
 - Yes, the house down the street is his.
 - The path through the forest was well marked.
 - I've written everyone except Grandma and Grandpa thank-you notes.

Adverb Phrases

5d. A prepositional phrase that modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb is called an **adverb phrase**.

Like an adverb, an adverb phrase tells *how, when, where, why, or to what extent (how long, how much, or how far)*.

ADVERBS Call now. [The adverb *now* tells when to call.]

Sharon crossed the finish line first. [The adverb *first* tells when Sharon crossed.]

ADVERB PHRASES Call on Monday. [The adverb phrase *on Monday* tells when to call.]

Sharon was first across the line. [The adverb phrase *across the line* tells how Sharon was first.]

EXERCISE C Underline the adverb phrase in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** The crowd rose from their seats. [The word group *from their seats* tells where they rose.]
- Would you jump off the high dive? [Which word group tells *where* you would jump?]
 - On most afternoons, she practices piano.
 - Does she come home on holidays?
 - Before breakfast, Marco usually helps his mother.
 - Are you curious about the surprise?

The Participle and the Participial Phrase

Participles

5e. A **participle** is a verb form that can be used as an adjective.

Participles answer the same questions that adjectives answer—*What kind? Which one? How much? or How many?*

ADJECTIVES a **good** teacher [The adjective *good* answers the question, *What kind of teacher?*]

the **large** dog [The adjective *large* answers the question, *Which dog?*]

PARTICIPLES a **respected** teacher [The participle *respected* answers the question, *What kind of teacher?*]

the **panting** dog [The participle *panting* answers the question, *Which dog?*]

NOTE There are two types of participles—present participles and past participles. All present participles end in *-ing*. However, the forms of past participles are not always the same. Many past participles end in *-ed*. Other past participles may end in *-en* or *-t* or may be formed in other ways.

PRESENT PARTICIPLES **jumping** frog, **clapping** audience, **peeling** paint

PAST PARTICIPLES **completed** test, **chosen** person, **torn** paper

EXERCISE A Underline the participle in each of the following sentences.

Examples 1. Satisfied customers are the best form of advertisement. [The participle *Satisfied* answers the question, *What kind of customers?*]

2. Oh no, your little brother is playing in the revolving door! [The participle *revolving* answers the question, *Which door?*]

1. A stacked pile of wood stood next to the back door. [Which word is a verb form that is describing the noun *pile*?]
2. We need written confirmation of our reservations. [Which word is a verb form that is describing the noun *confirmation*?]
3. Please put the book on the painted bookshelf.
4. The sound of running water was pleasant.
5. Blistering heat forced the hikers into the shade.
6. Have you sent your elected officials a letter about your concerns?
7. Everyone watched the prancing horses and their riders.

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8. We gave the young actors a standing ovation.
9. Is their specialty baked goods?
10. The next scheduled train should be here any moment.

Participial Phrases

5f. A **participial phrase** consists of a participle and any modifiers or complements the participle has. The entire phrase is used as an adjective.

Notice that a participial phrase may appear at the beginning, the middle, or the end of a sentence.

BEGINNING **Bent into a gentle curve**, the oak slat was ready for assembly.

MIDDLE The oak slat, **bent into a gentle curve**, was ready for assembly.

END The carpenter attached an oak slat, **bent into a gentle curve**.

EXERCISE B Underline the participial phrase in each of the following sentences.

- Examples**
1. Habits practiced for years are not easily broken. [The participial phrase describes the word *Habits*.]
 2. A meeting will be held today for those concerned about the issue. [The participial phrase describes the word *those*.]
11. Listening intently, I heard several changes in her voice. [Which two-word phrase describes the word *?*]
 12. Fold two eggs beaten with milk into the mixture. [Which word group describes the word *eggs*?]
 13. Her dream car was a convertible painted blue.
 14. Topping the bright package, the ribbon curled and bounced.
 15. We stayed in a room decorated with jungle scenes.
 16. The deer returned to her baby cuddled in the grass.
 17. He became an engineer known throughout the world.
 18. Above us, soaring with perfect ease, a bald eagle circled.
 19. Did you read the new book written by Gary Paulsen?
 20. Puzzled by the noise, we just waited outside.

The Infinitive and the Infinitive Phrase

Infinitives

5i. An **infinitive** is a verb form that can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Most infinitives begin with **to**.

NOUN **To excel** requires effort. [*To excel* is the subject.]

ADJECTIVE That's the movie **to see**. [*To see* is an adjective describing the noun *movie*.]

ADVERB They're certain **to win**. [*To win* is an adverb describing the adjective *certain*.]

NOTE The word *to* is not always used with an infinitive. *To* can also be a preposition. To recognize an infinitive, use this method. First, find the word *to*. Then, ask yourself, *Is the word that follows to a verb?* If so, you've probably found an infinitive. If *to* is followed by a noun, you've probably found a prepositional phrase.

EXAMPLES Go **to** our store to shop! [The first *to* is followed by the noun *store*. This *to* is a preposition, and its object is *store*.]

Go to our store **to** shop! [The second *to* is followed by the verb *shop*. *To shop* is an infinitive.]

EXERCISE A For each of the following sentences, underline the infinitive.

Examples 1. Do you want to dance? [*To* is followed by the verb *dance*, so *to dance* is an infinitive.]

2. The rabbit ran too quickly to be seen. [*To* is followed by the verb *be seen*, so *to be seen* is an infinitive.]

1. The baby wasn't so difficult to please. [Is the word *to* followed by a verb?]
2. Larry, the lawn needs to grow. [Is the word *to* followed by a verb?]
3. To succeed takes faith in oneself and the world.
4. This song is really not hard to play, Bill.
5. It's too soon to tell.
6. Since fourth grade, her one goal has been to fly.
7. Now is the time to decide!
8. To write, one must think.
9. Am I the last to know?
10. In this race Tom Harold is the one to watch.

Infinitive Phrases

5j. An **infinitive phrase** consists of an infinitive and any modifiers or complements the infinitive has. The entire phrase can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

NOUN Would you like **to join us?** [The infinitive *to join* is completed by the word *us*. The infinitive phrase is used as a noun that completes the meaning of the verb *like*.]

ADJECTIVE Do you have any **to sell at a lower price?** [The infinitive *to sell* is modified by the words *at a lower price*. The infinitive phrase is used as an adjective describing *any*.]

ADVERB Don't be so quick **to answer the question.** [The infinitive *to answer* is completed by the words *the question*. The infinitive phrase is used as an adverb describing the adjective *quick*.]

EXERCISE B Underline the entire infinitive phrase in each of the following sentences.

Examples 1. No, the paint is too wet to sit on. [*To sit* is the infinitive. The word *on* modifies the infinitive *to sit*.]

2. Do you plan to go to college? [*To go* is the infinitive. The word group *to college* modifies *to go*.]

11. What's the best way to take notes in class? [Is *to* followed by a verb? What words describe or complete that verb?]
12. To learn fine carpentry, you should study with an expert. [Is *to* followed by a verb? What words describe or complete that verb?]
13. Would you like to become a biologist?
14. It's somewhat early to predict the election results.
15. Be the first to sign up for our new club!
16. It's too hot to play soccer.
17. To learn Spanish well is one of my goals.
18. The senators asked for time to discuss the matter.
19. I just called to tell you about the party this weekend.
20. The explorers' purpose was to blaze a trail for others.

Appositives and Appositive Phrases

Appositives

5k. An **appositive** is a noun or a pronoun placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify or describe it.

APPOSITIVES Only one person, **Robin Thomas**, can do the job. [*Robin Thomas* identifies *person*.]

Only one person, **she**, can do the job. [*She* identifies *person*.]

Only she, **Robin Thomas**, can do the job. [*Robin Thomas* identifies *she*.]

NOTE Some appositives are set off with commas. Other appositives are so closely related to the word they identify or explain that no commas are used.

APPOSITIVE The artist **Jackson Pollock** was a wild painter. [No comma is needed because the appositive *Jackson Pollock* is so closely related to *artist*.]

EXERCISE A Underline the appositive in each of the following sentences.

Examples 1. My father, a sailor, is frequently away. [*Sailor* is an appositive that identifies the noun *father*.]

2. Someone, you, must do something! [*You* is an appositive that identifies the pronoun *someone*.]

1. The track coach, Mrs. Terry, runs with the team on Fridays. [Which word identifies the noun *coach*?]
2. The Appalachian Trail runs through this area, Shenandoah National Park. [Which three-word noun identifies the noun *area*?]
3. Sorry, but the only ones still available are these, the leftovers.
4. Careful and precise was the lab assistant, Jane.
5. I would like to introduce our mayor, Mr. Carlos Winter.
6. To what does the word *californium* refer?
7. Surely, they, the founders, would agree.
8. Have you read the novel *Hatchet*?
9. If you students can assist us, please call our toll-free number.
10. This play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, has endured.

Appositive Phrases

5I. An **appositive phrase** includes an appositive together with its modifiers.

An appositive may be modified by adjectives, phrases, and even clauses. The appositive phrase includes the appositive and all of its modifiers.

EXAMPLE My grandmother, **the first person in our town with a computer**, surfs the Net daily. [The appositive is *person*. *Person* is described by *the first* and *in our town with a computer*.]

EXERCISE B Underline the appositive phrase in each of the following sentences.

Examples 1. People in the Caribbean enjoy *blaff*, fish or pork stew. [The appositive phrase *fish or pork stew* identifies the noun *blaff*.]

2. Rent us a movie, please, any of the new releases. [The appositive phrase *any of the new releases* explains the noun *movie*.]

11. Thank our sponsor, the very generous Gadgets Company. [Which word group identifies who the *sponsor* is?]
12. I'm inviting everyone, every family at Hideaway Apartments. [Which word group explains who *everyone* is?]
13. Charlotte Forten, a famous African American educator in the nineteenth century, was published in *Atlantic Monthly*.
14. We must study and protect these, the only traces of that mysterious civilization.
15. The research team needs an assistant, someone with a background in chemistry.
16. A student of classical music, Nina Simone made popular music her realm.
17. Frankincense, a substance from African or Asian trees, has been a valuable item for more than two thousand years.
18. Honor and a sense of duty, those are the qualities of a great leader.
19. Harry gave me his new number, a cell phone out of this area code.
20. The best one, the only practical product on the market, is our Widget 3000.