

# PHRASES

A phrase is a sequence of grammatically related words without a subject, a predicate, or both. **Phrases can not stand alone**, but they are frequently used in sentences. Phrases may be found before, after, or in the middle of clauses, and they convey information which is less important than the information in a clause. The most common kinds of phrases are noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases, verbal phrases, and appositive phrases. Each is noted below.

**NOUN PHRASES** consist of a noun to which may be added determiners, adjectives, or other nouns.

*The last ship had arrived. (the last ship is the noun phrase)*

*I bought a new computer disk. (a new computer disk is the noun phrase)*

**VERB PHRASES** consist of a main verb with any modifiers.

*The ship had arrived. (had arrived is the verb phrase)*

**PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES** consist of the preposition with its subject and any modifiers.

*With great feeling, the teacher discussed the Civil War. (With great feeling is the prepositional phrase)*

**VERBAL PHRASES** consist of a word group containing a verbal (a verb form that functions as something other than a verb); specifically, the word group can be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb. Verbals may be classified as gerunds, participles, or infinitives.

**Gerund Phrases** include a verb form ending in *-ing*. These phrases always function as nouns; consequently, they can be subjects, objects or complements.

*Running each morning is my favorite pastime. (used as subject)*

*My math teacher demonstrated factoring polynomials. (used as direct object)*

*His job is buying and selling stocks. (used as subject complement)*

**Participial Phrases** include a verb form ending in *-ing*, *-d*, *-ed*, *-t*, or *-en*. These phrases function mainly as adjectives.

*The group arrived in a van loaded with heavy equipment. (loaded with heavy equipment is the participle phrase modifying the noun van)*

**Infinitive Phrases** include a verb form which consists of “to” and the root form of the verb. These phrases may function as a noun, adjective or adverb.

*Michelle went to New York to visit relatives. (used as adverb: to visit relatives modifies the verb went)*

*His daughter needs more money to buy books. (used as adjective: to buy books modifies money)*

**NOTE:** A verbal does not function as a verb and **can not** take the place of a sentence verb. Also, any group of words containing a verbal but not a sentence verb is a sentence fragment.

**APPOSITIVE PHRASES** identify, explain, or supplement the meaning of the word it adjoins.

*Alpine Lace, a brand of Swiss cheese, is a good choice for those watching fat intake. (a brand of Swiss cheese is the appositive phrase identifying Alpine Lace)*