

CHAPTER

# 12

## *Grammatical Definitions and ESL Concerns*

## Grammatical Definitions

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### Know the parts of speech and their uses.

The parts of speech are the classifications of English words according to their forms and their uses in sentences: verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Many words can serve as more than one part of speech. For example, *round* can be a noun (we won the *round*), a verb (they *rounded* the corner), or an adjective (I have a *round* table). Being able to recognize parts of speech will help you analyze and discuss the sentences that you write.

#### 83a Verbs show action, process, or existence.

The **verb** is an essential part of every sentence. Most verbs show some kind of action or process:

Barry *resigned*.      The lady *screamed*.      The water *boiled*.

Other verbs, known as **linking verbs**, express a state or condition. They link the subject with the noun, pronoun, or adjective that describes or identifies it. (The word linked to the subject is the **subject complement**.) Linking verbs include *be* (*am, is, are, was, were, being, been*) and *become, remain, grow, seem, appear, look, sound, feel, taste, and smell*:

Rosa *is* a brilliant attorney.      The meat *smelled* rancid.

**Tense** Tense refers to the time indicated in the sentence. The form of the verb indicates the time of the action or statement (see 55):

Sam writes. Sam wrote. Sam will write.

**Voice** If the subject of the sentence does the action, its verb is in the active voice. If the subject receives the action, the verb is in the passive voice (see 23e and 57):

**Active voice:** The reviewer condemned the film's violence. (*Subject [reviewer] acts.*)

**Passive voice:** The film's violence was condemned by the reviewer. (*Subject [violence] receives action.*)

**Forms** The English verb has a limited number of forms. Verbs may be regular (*walk, walked, walked*) or irregular (*see, saw, seen*).

<b>Infinitive:</b>	to walk, to see
<b>Present:</b>	walk, walks; see, sees
<b>Past:</b>	walked, saw
<b>Past participle:</b>	walked, seen
<b>Present participle:</b>	walking, seeing

The infinitive, the past tense, and the past participle are known as the **principal parts** of a verb. Most verbs are regular: they just add *-ed* to form the past and past participle. Irregular verbs may change spelling: *go, went, gone; see, saw, seen*. The present participle always ends in *-ing*. For the addition of *-s* in the present tense, see 55.

**Predicates** The main verb in a sentence is called the **simple predicate**. The main verb with all the words that belong to it or qualify it is called the **complete predicate** because it completes the subject (see 84c).

**Verb phrases** A **verb phrase** is made up of a **main verb** preceded by one or more **auxiliary verbs**: I *will have left* by Friday. The most commonly used auxiliaries are *have (has, had), be (am, is, are, was, were, been), do (does, did), will, would, shall, should, can, could, may, might, must, and ought*.

The first word in a verb phrase shows tense and agrees with the subject: she *has* gone; she *had* gone; they *have* gone; they *had* gone. In identifying verb phrases, note that other words may come between the first auxiliary verb and the rest of the phrase:

His writing *has* never *made* sense to me.

Most children *have*, at least once in their lives, *dreamed* of riding on a spaceship.

**Verbals** Forms of the verb may function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. When they do, they are called **verbals**, and they may combine with other words in **verbal phrases**:

*Waiting for the train every day* is not my idea of happiness.

**Gerunds** are verbals ending in *-ing* that are used as nouns: “*Jogging* is popular.” Sometimes a gerund has an object and/or modifiers:

*Paying bills promptly* is not easy. (The gerund phrase—*paying bills promptly*—also functions as a noun.)

*Laughing* is good for one's health. (gerund as subject)

I would enjoy *laughing all the way to the bank*. (gerund phrase as direct object)

**Present participles** have the same form as gerunds but are used as adjectives, not as nouns:

The man *laughing* too loudly annoyed us. (*Laughing* is a present participle modifying *man*.)

### 83b Nouns name things.

Nouns are the names given to things real or imagined, tangible or intangible:

trees      endurance      Colorado      woman      physics

In sentences, nouns can be used as subjects, objects of active verbs, complements of linking verbs, and appositives:

Subject	Appositive	Object of preposition	
<i>John Nolan,</i>	<i>assistant to the</i>	<i>mayor,</i>	<i>gave</i>
Indirect object		Direct object	
<i>reporters</i>	<i>a written</i>	<i>statement.</i>	

Nouns can also function as modifiers, as in *brick* wall and *television* news.

Almost all nouns take an -s or -es ending or change spelling to form plurals (see 47). They also take an apostrophe and s or apostrophe alone to show possession: *women's* rights, *prospectors'* expeditions (see 42).

### 83c Pronouns take the place of nouns.

The noun that a pronoun refers to is called the *antecedent*:

The men rushed in. *They* were angry. (The antecedent of *they* is *men*.)

There are six different kinds of pronouns:

**Personal pronouns** (*I, he, she, it, they, we*, etc.) take different forms according to their function in a sentence. See 51.

**Relative pronouns** (*who, whom, whose, which, that*) join a dependent clause to a noun. See 83h.

**Interrogative pronouns** (*who, whom, whose, which, what*) are used in questions.

**Demonstrative pronouns** (*this, that, these, those*) point to nouns: “*This* is better than *that*.” (When used with nouns, they are called demonstrative adjectives: “*This* tablet is cheaper than *that* tablet.”)

**Indefinite pronouns** refer to indefinite persons or things. Examples are *someone, everyone, anything, another*. For verb agreement with indefinite pronouns as subjects, see 50.

**Reflexive pronouns** are used when the antecedent takes action toward itself: “The tomcat bathed *himself* after eating the bowl of food.”

### 83d Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers.

To *modify* is to describe, qualify, or limit the meaning of a word. **Adjectives** modify nouns and pronouns; **adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs:

The saleswoman approached the *reluctant* customer. (adjective *reluctant* modifying noun *customer*)

The program progressed *quite rapidly*. (adverb *quite* modifying adverb *rapidly*, which modifies verb *progressed*)

We faced *extremely* serious problems. (adverb *extremely* modifying adjective *serious*)

Most adjectives and adverbs can be arranged in order of intensity: *happy, happier, happiest; angrily, more angrily, most angrily*. See 54.

**Conjunctive adverbs** are words that can introduce independent clauses and join independent clauses to form compound sentences (see 36 and 49):

*Therefore*, I move that we vote on the bill today.

Rain is forecast; *however*, let's go ahead and start the game.

The conjunctive adverb, which indicates transition, can also appear within or at the end of an independent clause:

He felt, *moreover*, that the job didn't pay enough to warrant moving to another state.

All things are not equal, *however*.

### Conjunctive Adverbs

accordingly	finally	likewise	similarly
also	furthermore	meanwhile	specifically
anyway	hence	moreover	still
besides	however	nevertheless	subsequently
certainly	incidentally	next	then*
consequently	indeed	nonetheless	therefore
conversely	instead	otherwise	thus

\**Then* is the only conjunctive adverb that is not usually followed by a comma.

Note that **transitional phrases** have the same function as conjunctive adverbs and require the same punctuation:

Nina did not like the car; *as a matter of fact*, she hated it. *For example*, she especially disliked the exterior color, the cramped interior, and the diesel engine.

### Transitional Phrases

after all	even so	in fact
as a matter of fact	for example	in other words
as a result	for instance	in the first place
at any rate	in addition	on the contrary
at the same time	in conclusion	on the other hand

## 83e Prepositions and conjunctions are structural words that work with the major parts of speech.

Verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs express most of the information in sentences, but the meaning of a whole sentence also depends on structural words that show relationships among those major words. Two main groups of structural words are prepositions and conjunctions.

**Prepositions** relate and link one word with another; examples are *of*, *in*, *on*, *into*, *at*, *to*, *for*, *after*, *with*, *with regard to*, and *aside from*. They are followed by nouns and pronouns that form the object of a preposition.

*After the long wait*, we enjoyed the concert.

↑                      ↑  
**Preposition**      **Object of  
preposition**

A preposition and its object together are called a **prepositional phrase**:

The old tree *in the center of town* stood *near the condemned building*.

Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives or as adverbs. See **83g**.

**Conjunctions** connect words or word groups. The **coordinating conjunctions** *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, and *yet* join words, phrases, or clauses of the same grammatical type:

The *camera* and the *lens* must be purchased separately. (*And* joins two nouns.)

He *lied* and *stole*. (*And* joins two verbs.)

The hunter was *old* yet *strong*. (*Yet* joins two adjectives.)

Neither *on land* nor *on sea* did they meet any resistance. (*Nor* joins two prepositional phrases.)

*The mountains were steep*, but *natural passes separated them*. (*But* joins two independent clauses.)

The coordinating conjunctions *for* and *so* are used only between word groups that express complete thoughts:

He used the wrong film, *so* the pictures did not turn out.

**Subordinating conjunctions** introduce word groups and make them subordinate, or dependent: they need other word groups for their completion (see **20**).

*Since Jamie moved to Dallas* [subordinate], she has matured.

I feel weak *because I have not eaten* [subordinate].

### Subordinating Conjunctions

after	if	unless
although	in order that	until
as	rather than	when
as if	since	where
because	so that	whereas
before	that	whether
even though	though	while

### 83f Interjections express emotion.

Interjections such as *oh* and *ah* show emotion. They may be punctuated as sentences (*Oh!*) or included in sentences (*Oh, I wish you would say something*), but they are not grammatically related to other words in the sentence.

### 83g A phrase is a group of related words without a complete subject and verb.

The function of a single word can be filled by a group of words. Such a group of words that work together, but lack a subject and verb, is called a **phrase**:

<b>Noun:</b>	I enjoy <i>art</i> .
<b>Phrase as noun:</b>	I enjoy <i>visiting museums</i> .
<b>Verb:</b>	He <i>went</i> .
<b>Verb phrase:</b>	He <i>should have been going</i> .
<b>Adjective:</b>	The <i>tall</i> man is my uncle.
<b>Phrase as adjective:</b>	The man <i>towering over the others</i> is my uncle.
<b>Adverb:</b>	She tried <i>hard</i> .
<b>Phrase as adverb:</b>	She tried <i>with all her strength</i> .

There are four other common types of phrases:

#### Prepositional phrase:

<b>Adjective:</b>	The clock <i>on the mantel</i> belonged to my grandfather.
<b>Adverb:</b>	He drove the truck <i>around the block</i> .

#### Infinitive phrase:

<b>Noun:</b>	He wants <i>to fight with everyone</i> .
<b>Adjective:</b>	There must be another way <i>to settle this problem</i> .
<b>Adverb:</b>	The plumber came <i>to fix the sink</i> .

#### Gerund phrase:

<b>Noun:</b>	<i>Playing on a winning team</i> adds to the fun of baseball.
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#### Participial phrase:

<b>Adjective:</b>	The smoke <i>rising from the house</i> alerted the neighbors. A house <i>built on a rock</i> will endure.
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### 83h A clause is a group of words with a subject and verb that is used as part of a sentence.

If a clause expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence, it is called an **independent clause** (or *main clause*). If it does not express a complete thought, it is called a **dependent clause** (or *subordinate clause*) and cannot stand alone as a sentence.

The mayor spoke last night. (independent clause properly punctuated as a sentence)

When the mayor spoke last night. (dependent clause improperly punctuated as a sentence)

Dependent clauses are introduced and made dependent or subordinate by subordinating conjunctions (such as *because, when, after, although*—see the list on page 299). Such clauses cannot stand alone; they modify the main part of the sentence.

*When the mayor spoke last night*, reporters were strangely absent.

↑  
**Dependent/subordinate  
clause**

↑  
**Independent/main  
clause**

A subordinate clause functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb:

**Noun:** They do not know *who wrote the threatening letter*. (clause as object of *know*)

**Adjective:** People *who exercise* live longer than people *who do not*.

**Adverb:** I ate the cake *because I was hungry*.

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## Know the elements of a sentence.

### 84a Subject

When a noun, pronoun, or verbal is doing something or is being described by a verb in a sentence, it is a **subject**:

*I* [subject] saw the game Tuesday night.

Joan's *portrait* [subject] was painted.

*Walking* [subject] is excellent exercise.

### 84b Compound Subject

When a subject consists of more than one noun, pronoun, or verbal, it is a **compound subject**:

*Bushes and shrubs* obscure our rusty old back door.

The complete subject includes all the words related to the subject:

*The first person who comes to the party* [complete subject] never wants to leave.

### 84c Predicate

The main verb in a sentence is called the **predicate**. It can be one word: “I *saw* the game Tuesday night.” More often, the predicate will consist of several words that make up the complete verb:

He never *wants to leave*.

She *has always been able to learn languages easily*.

### 84d Compound Predicate

When a predicate has more than one main verb, it is a **compound predicate**:

Every fall, we *prune and fertilize* our azalea bushes.

The complete verb or predicate includes all the words related to the predicate:

The first person who comes to the party *never wants to leave* [complete predicate].

### 84e Objects

A noun, pronoun, or verbal that directly receives the action of a verb is called a **direct object**:

Jennifer despises *housekeeping*. (*Housekeeping* is the direct object of *despises*: What does Jennifer despise?)

The library discarded forty-eight *books*. (*Books* is the direct object of *discarded*: What did the library discard?)

A noun, pronoun, or verbal that is related to the action but that is not the direct receiver of the action is called an **indirect object**. It states to whom (or to what) or for whom (or for what) something is done:

Mystery writers usually give *readers* a few clues. (Writers give clues [direct object] to readers [indirect object].)

The teacher told *Jay* some sad news about his grades. (The teacher told news [direct object] to Jay [indirect object].)

### 84f Complements

Whereas action verbs may have direct objects, linking verbs—forms of the verb *be* such as *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *been*—as well as those verbs that describe a condition or position—such as *feel*, *look*, *seem*, *become*, *taste*, *smell*—take a **complement**. Subject complements complete the meaning of a subject:

Cocoa, in its natural state, is *bitter*. (*Bitter* describes *cocoa*, the subject.)

Object complements complete the meaning of verbs such as *call*, *elect*, *find*, *make*, *name*; they identify or qualify the direct object:

She called	the proposal	<i>foolish</i> .
↑	↑	↑
<b>Verb</b>	<b>Direct object</b>	<b>Object complement</b>

### 84g Compound Sentences

When two independent clauses are joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet*) or by a semicolon, the result is a **compound sentence**:

Online writing labs have much to offer a student writer; they are a valuable Internet resource.

Working while being a full-time student is difficult, **yet** many students manage to do both.

### 84h Complex Sentences

When a dependent clause is joined to an independent clause, the result is a **complex sentence**:

When the snow stopped, the ground was white.

↑	↑
<b>Dependent clause</b>	<b>Independent clause</b>

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## 84i Compound-Complex Sentences

When one or more dependent clauses are joined to two or more independent clauses, the result is a **compound-complex sentence**:

Because the machine parts were defective,	the manager made an angry phone call to the supplier;	in fact, she threatened to sue.
↑ <b>dependent clause</b>	↑ <b>independent clause</b>	↑ <b>independent clause</b>

## ESL Concerns

English has a number of features that can cause difficulty for international students. The following guidelines will help to clarify these issues.

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## Use plurals and possessives carefully.

As in most languages, English nouns usually change spelling when they move from singular to plural:

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
boy	boys
chair	chairs
cactus	cactuses
woman	women

However, unlike most languages, English nouns show possession by using the apostrophe and *s* (for singular and some plurals) and the apostrophe only (for most plurals):

boy's	(regular singular possessive)
boys'	(regular plural possessive)
chair's	(regular singular possessive)
chairs'	(regular plural possessive)
cactus's	(regular singular possessive)
cactuses'	(regular plural possessive)
woman's	(regular singular possessive)
women's	(irregular plural possessive)

Make sure that you know whether the word you are spelling is singular or plural and if it is possessive. A possessive is a shortened form:

the car of John = John's car

the issues of women = women's issues

Using this distinction can help you when you are dealing with a troublesome word such as *company* (in the sense of a business or firm). There are four possible spellings of this word, according to the singular/plural/possessive context:

company (singular, not possessive)

company's (singular possessive = of the company)

companies (plural—more than one—not possessive)

companies' (plural possessive = of the companies)

See also 47 for spelling plurals and 42 for apostrophe usage.

## 86 Make sure that your sentence has a subject.

Some languages use understood subjects, with sentences frequently starting with a verb. However, in English, subjects must be stated in all sentences except imperatives (commands), in which the subject (*you*) is understood:

Start the car.

Close your books before beginning the exam.

Wake up and smell the coffee.

The subjects of all other English sentences must be present:

**Incorrect:** Is a very effective computer analyst.

**Correct:** She is a very effective computer analyst.

English sometimes uses *there* and *it* as expletives, words that postpone the subject. Do not omit these:

**Incorrect:** Is a very nice day.

**Correct:** It is a very nice day.

**Incorrect:** Is a troubleshooting manual in my desk.

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**Correct:** There is a troubleshooting manual in my desk.

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## Distinguish between count and noncount nouns for correct article use.

**87a The indefinite articles (*a* and *an*) should be used with nouns that refer to persons, places, things, or ideas that can be counted:**

a woman	four women
an estate	seven estates
a smartphone	three smartphones
a theory	several theories

Some nouns refer to quantities, collections, or abstractions and are called “noncount”:

salt	wisdom
rice	information
furniture	advice

Do not use an article with a noncount noun. These words are either not modified or are preceded by words such as *some*, *any*, or *more*:

**Incorrect:** Can I have a rice, please?

**Correct:** Can I have some rice, please?

**Incorrect:** Is there a salt left?

**Correct:** Is there any salt left?

**Incorrect:** Ralph bought a new furniture yesterday.

**Correct:** Ralph bought some new furniture yesterday.

**Also correct:** Ralph bought new furniture yesterday.

**Also correct:** Ralph bought a new piece of furniture yesterday.

**Incorrect:** Can I get an information from you?

**Correct:** Can I get some information from you?

Some English nouns are both count and noncount. Frequently, this situation reflects the noun both as a thing and as a concept:

His writings about world currency gained him the Nobel Prize in Economics. (Here, *currency*—money—is used as a concept and is noncount.)

Some of the currencies of that region are extremely colorful. (Here, the reference is to actual pieces of money: things that can be counted.)

### 87b The definite article (*the*) can be used with most singular nouns. When introducing a new noun, use an indefinite article:

A car broke down in the passing lane of the interstate this morning.

In a subsequent reference to the same noun, switch to the definite article, *the*:

*The car* blocked traffic for almost an hour.

Similarly, when a noun's context is fixed, *the* should be used:

#### Incorrect

a ground beneath my feet

a nose on her face

a moon circling the Earth

#### Correct

the ground beneath my feet

the nose on her face

the moon circling the Earth

Sometimes, elements in the sentence define the context of the noun:

The cat *in the window* is the one that I want.

The problem *on page 428 of my algebra textbook* is very difficult.

Do not use *the* with nouns in the following situations:

#### Noncount Nouns Reflecting Unmodified Abstractions

**Incorrect:** The wisdom is a very good thing to attain.

**Correct:** Wisdom is a very good thing to attain.

**But:** The wisdom of the ages is a very good thing to attain. (Here, the abstract noun *wisdom* is followed by a modifier, *of the ages*.)

#### Noncount Nouns Reflecting Quantity

**Incorrect:** The sugar is a good thing to add to coffee.

**Correct:** Sugar is a good thing to add to coffee.

**But:** The sugar *grown in South Florida* has a curious history.

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**Proper Nouns****Incorrect:** I went to the London for the 2012 Summer Olympics.**Correct:** I went to London for the 2012 Summer Olympics.**Incorrect:** I asked the Robert if he had a spare pencil.**Correct:** I asked Robert if he had a spare pencil.

There are numerous exceptions to this rule, most of them involving large geographical areas or features:

the Great Lakes	the Atlantic Ocean
the Great Plains	The Hague
the Adirondack Mountains	the West Coast
the Appalachians	the Bahamas

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## Use cumulative adjectives in a commonly accepted order.

Cumulative adjectives are those in which one adjective modifies the rest of the expression (see **29d**):

a wonderful old house

English requires that these adjectives be ordered according to their type. The normal order is as follows:

*Determiner:* a, an, the, this, those, my, our, many, two

*Evaluation:* wonderful, excruciating, interesting, awful

*Size:* big, small, minute

*Shape:* round, oblong, trapezoidal

*Age:* old, new, young, antique

*Color:* green, teal, brown

*National or Geographic Origin:* Irish, Scandinavian, Middle Eastern

*Religion:* Catholic, Methodist, Jewish

*Material:* wood, iron, paper

**Correct:** a wonderful little antique French saucer

**Correct:** an excruciating old brown cotton dress

## 89 Be careful with complex verb structures.

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### 89a With modal verbs and forms of *do*, use the base (infinitive) form.

**Incorrect:** The letter carrier *will brings* us good news, I hope.

**Correct:** The letter carrier *will bring* us good news, I hope.

**Incorrect:** I *can plays* a violin very well.

**Correct:** I *can play* a violin very well.

**Incorrect:** *Do you wants* to go to a movie?

**Correct:** *Do you want* to go to a movie?

### 89b Use infinitives or gerunds after verbs according to convention.

Some verbs are followed by infinitives (I choose *to write*), some by gerunds (I enjoy *writing*), and some by either (I like *to write*; I like *writing*).

#### Verbs That Must Be Followed by Infinitives

agree	decide	mean	refuse
ask	expect	need	venture
beg	fail	offer	wait
bother	plan	want	choose
hope	pretend	wish	claim
manage	promise		

**Incorrect:** I need *telling* you something.

**Correct:** I need *to tell* you something.

**Incorrect:** I promise *taking* good care of your dog.

**Correct:** I promise *to take* good care of your dog.

In some instances, a noun or pronoun follows the verb and precedes an infinitive:

She *convinced me to change* my mind.

His sleepless night *caused him to fail* the exam.

*Have*, *let*, and *make* are special cases that are followed by the verb (but without *to*):

My uncle *let me drive* his car.

My wife *made me change* my shirt before dinner.

The customs officer *had her complete* a new set of forms.

### Verbs That Must Be Followed by Gerunds

admit	deny	imagine	recall
appreciate	discuss	keep	resist
avoid	dislike	miss	risk
consider	enjoy	postpone	suggest
delay	finish	practice	tolerate

**Incorrect:** He recalled *to meet* with me last week.

**Correct:** He recalled *meeting* with me last week.

**Incorrect:** I avoided *to take* the class.

**Correct:** I avoided *taking* the class.

### Verbs That Can Be Followed by Either Infinitives or Gerunds

begin	like
continue	love
hate	start

**Correct:** I began *to sing*.

**Correct:** I began *singing*.

**Correct:** Eduardo hates *talking* to Melissa.

**Correct:** Eduardo hates *to talk* to Melissa.

Note that the meaning is the same in each pair of sentences. With *forget*, *remember*, *stop*, and *try*, however, the choice of infinitive or gerund will radically alter the sentence's meaning:

The old man *stopped to take* his medicine.

The old man *stopped taking* his medicine.

For a discussion of other problems involving complex verb structures, see **55** and **56**.

### 89c Use phrasal verbs according to convention.

**Phrasal verbs** are sometimes called “two-word verbs.” Although they can seem redundant (*sit down*, *stand up*), phrasal verbs in English often have figurative, idiomatic usages:

Jim *stood me up* on our last date. (Jim didn’t arrive for the date.)

The boss *sat* Mario *down* and explained what he would have to do to succeed in his new job. (The boss may or may not have asked Mario to be seated.)

The two examples are of **separable phrasal verbs**—an object comes between them. In an **inseparable phrasal verb**, however, the two words stay together:

The car *broke down* sixty miles from the nearest mechanic.

I *got up* at 5:00 this morning.

Linda’s secretary will *look into* the situation.

Note that phrasal verbs can contain three words, the last being a preposition:

I have *put up with* his insults for too long.

You don’t expect to *get away with* that plan, I hope.

Maria was *looking forward to* the end of the semester.

