

Types of Phrases

A phrase is a group of related words within a sentence that complements the overall structure of sentence. A phrase lacks both the subject and the object. Hence, a phrase cannot stand alone to give complete meaning. The underline group of words in the following sentence is a phrase.

Example:

- I saw a joker in the street.

A phrase can act as a noun, an adjective, a preposition or an adverb. The function of a phrase depends upon its construction and place in a sentence. Depending upon its function in a sentence, phrases are divided into various types: Noun Phrase, Verb Phrase, Adjective Phrase, Adverb Phrase, Gerund Phrase, Infinitive Phrase and Absolute Phrase.

1

NOUN PHRASE

A phrase that acts like a noun in the sentence is called a Noun Phrase. It contains a noun & other associated words (usually determiners & modifiers) which modify the noun.

A noun phrase comprises of a noun as a head-word and other related words (determiners & modifiers) may come before or after the noun. The entire phrase serves as a noun in a sentence.

Noun Phrase = noun + modifiers (or determiners)

Examples:

- They hired a huge beautiful home. (as noun: object)
- She bought a decent black shirt. (as noun: object)
- One of our close relatives never drinks coffee. (as noun: subject)
- A woman in the window shouted for help. (as noun: subject)

A sentence can also consist of more than one noun phrase.

Example:

- One of our close relatives bought a beautiful red car. (as nouns both as subject & object)

2

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

A phrase comprising a preposition and object of preposition (noun or pronoun) is called a prepositional phrase. It may also contain other modifiers.

e.g. near a wall, on a table, in the room, under a tree, at the door etc

Prepositional phrase has a noun or pronoun which called the object of preposition.

Examples:

- The kids were laughing at the joker.
- He is sleeping on the carpet.
- The teacher looked at the black-board.
- He drives the car in a high speed.
- He always speaks in a loud voice.

3

ADJECTIVE PHRASE

A phrase that acts like an adjective in a sentence is called adjective phrase. Like an adjective it modifies (adds to meaning of) a noun or a pronoun. It comprises of adjectives, modifiers and other words modifying the noun or pronoun.

- A kid on the roof is looking at the sky. (modifies noun: kid)
- The boy in the shop is my friend. (modifies noun: boy)
- She bought a beautiful brown chair. (modifies noun: chair)
- A lady with long hair is walking in the garden. (modifies noun: lady)
- She gave me a cup full of tea. (modifies noun: cup)
- A student from my college won the competition. (modifies noun: student)

4

ADVERB PHRASE

A phrase that acts like an adverb in a sentence is called adverb phrase. Like an adverb, it modifies (add to meaning of) a verb or other adverb in the sentence. It contains an adverb and other words (i.e. noun, preposition, modifiers) which, as a whole, act as an adverb phrase.

Examples:

- He drives a car in a very high speed. (modifies verb: drive)
- The racer was running very fast. (modifies verb: run)
- She always speaks in a respectful way. (modifies verb: speak)
- They walked along the wall. (modifies verb: walk)
- She welcomed the guests in a nice way. (modifies verb: welcome)
- He stayed at college for a few hours. (modifies verb: stay)
- The kid sat beside her mother. (modifies verb: sit)

2

VERB PHRASE

A verb phrase is the group of main verbs and helping-verbs (auxiliaries) within a sentence.

Examples:

- She is writing a letter
- He has taken his annual exam.
- Students must reach in time for the class.
- They have been playing game since morning.
- She is waiting for someone.

6

INFINITIVE PHRASE

An infinitive phrase contains an infinitive (to + base form of verb) and modifiers or other related words linked to the infinitive. An infinitive phrase will always acts as a noun, an adjective or adverb in the sentence.

Examples:

- I enjoy to drive a car. (As noun)
- To get success in exam is an ambition of every student. (As noun)
- Government made a plan to help the poor. (As adjective modifying noun: plan)
- She sang a song to please the audience. (As adverb modifying verb: sing)
- The joker danced to entertain the people. (As adjective modifying noun: dance)

7

GERUND PHRASE

A gerund phrase is a group of a gerund (verb + ing), modifiers and other related words linked to the gerund. A gerund phrase functions as a noun in the sentence.

Examples:

- I enjoy listening to the music. (As noun/as object)
- He started writing the letter. (As noun/as object)
- Walking in the sun affects the complexion of a person. (As noun/as subject)
- Crying of a baby disturbed me a lot. (As noun/as subject)

8

PARTICIPLE PHRASE

A participle phrase is a group of a present-participle (verb + ing) or a past-participle verb, modifiers and other linked words. A participle phrase is punctuated with a comma or commas. It always acts as an adjective (modifying a noun) in a sentence.

Examples:

- The students, **raising their hands**, need extra page. (modifies noun: students)
- She got a mail, **mentioning about her exam**. (modifies noun: mail)
- The chair, **made of plastic**, looks very beautiful. (modifies noun: chair)

9

ABSOLUTE PHRASE

Absolute phrase is also called a nominative phrase. It consists of a noun or a pronoun, a participle and linked modifiers. It modifies (tells more about) the sentence. It looks like a clause but lacks true finite verb. It is separated by a comma in a sentence.

Examples:

- She is looking very much happy, her face expressing a shine of happiness.
- He, having books in his hand, was going to college.
- He, having anger in his eyes, met his enemy.