

Introduction to the Basic Elements of Greek-English Grammar: Parts of Speech

1. Noun

[Alludes to a person, place, thing, action, concept, etc.]

Common noun: “boy,” “farm,” “knitting,” “dignity”

Proper noun: “Saskatoon,” “Mr. Dressup”

2. Pronoun

[Stands in place of a noun.]

Examples: “I,” “he,” “she,” “it,” “us,” “you,” “they”

[**Relative pronoun:** “I know the man **who** killed Socrates.”]

[**Interrogative pronoun:** “**Who** killed Socrates?”]

3. Verb

[Indicates an action or a state.]

Transitive: “You **read** the book.” “We **are kissing** them.”

Active: “I **will hit** him.”

Passive: “I **was hit** by him.”

Intransitive: “I **slept**.” “You **will run**.” “They **sing**.”

Copulative/Linking:

“I **am** president.”

“We **became** arrogant.”

Subject [in the examples above: “I,” “We”]

Complement [in the examples above: “president,” “arrogant”]

4. Adjective

[Describes (“modifies”) a noun.]

Examples: “happy,” “tall,” “silly,” “fast”

Attributive — gives an attribute of a noun which is assumed to be true; serves to specify something about the noun:

“The **green** cow ate the grass.” [i.e., the green cow as opposed to the brown or yellow cow]

Predicative — actively asserts something about a noun:

“The cow was **green!**”

“The cow fell, **exhausted**, to the ground.”

[**Interrogative adjective:** “**What** books have you read?” “**What kind of** fruit is that?”]

5. Adverb

[Answers the question, “How?” “In what manner?” “Under what circumstances?”]

Modifying a verb: “He ate **quickly**.” “She slept **soundly**.”

Modifying an adjective: “They were **very** smart.”

Modifying another adverb: “He ate **very** quickly.”

Examples of other adverbs: here, there, yesterday, often, only, undoubtedly, quite, almost, even.¹

¹ The Wikipedia page on adverbs provides a useful overview: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adverb>

6. Preposition

[Clarifies the relationship of a noun to the rest of the sentence: “He slept **in** the bed.”]

[Usually stands before its noun: hence the name (*prae* [“before/in front”] + *pōnō* [“to put/place”]).]

Examples: “in,” “on,” “at,” “under”

7. Conjunction

[Joins together two **clauses, phrases,** or words.]

Coordinating:

“I love him **and** he loves me.” [Copulative]

“I hate him **but** he loves me.” [Adversative]

Subordinating:

“**When** Pericles saw his friend Aspasia, he laughed.” [Temporal]

“**Because** I ate well, I slept soundly.” [Causal]

“**Although** I hate him, he loves me.” [Concessive]

“**If** I see her, I will tell her.” [Conditional]

8. Particle

[Sometimes called a sentence adverb, the particle is difficult to define. (Often it is a term used to classify a word that doesn’t seem to fit anywhere else. E.g., “now” in the sentence, “Now that’s just wrong!” Cf. the Canadian, “That was some fine broomstacking, eh?”) A good general definition is that of David Stifler (my source for much of this discussion): “Particles convey such diverse kinds of pragmatic information as the speaker’s emotional state, the speaker’s assumptions about the addressee’s emotional state, the speaker’s expectations about the addressee’s likelihood of listening to him, whether the statement is assumed by the speaker to be true or false, the urgency (or lack thereof) with which the speaker is talking, and any number of other important considerations in any conversation.”² In Classical Greek, particles more often indicate the logical, rhetorical, or emotional connection between two sentences, or the general force of a sentence as a whole.]

Examples: οὐν, δέ [Note that the first of these is listed in *Athenaze* as an adverb, while δέ is often more readily treated as a conjunction.]

9. Interjection

[An exclamation. Similar to a particle in some ways but regularly expresses some form of agitation or excitement, and tends to stand alone.]

“Oh!” “Hey!” “Oops!”

Clause: any statement that contains a subject and a verb.

Independent clause: a clause that can stand on its own as a complete sentence — e.g., “He didn’t seem happy.”

Dependent/Subordinate clause: a clause that cannot stand on its own as a complete sentence — e.g., “Although he had just won the lottery”

Thus the sentence, “Although he had just won the lottery, he didn’t seem happy,” contains both a

dependent/subordinate clause (“Although he had just won the lottery”) and an **independent or main clause** (“he didn’t seem happy”).

Phrase: a group of words in a sentence that logically belong together as a unit but do not contain a subject and/or a verb and convey no complete meaning of their own — e.g., “in the back yard” [a **prepositional phrase**]

² https://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/linguistics/2008_Stifler.pdf