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MARCELLA FRANK



# MODERN ENGLISH

A PRACTICAL  
REFERENCE GUIDE



*Second Edition*

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# MODERN ENGLISH



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# **MODERN ENGLISH**

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## **A Practical Reference Guide**

**Second Edition**

**MARCELLA FRANK**

**New York University**



**REGENTS/PRENTICE HALL**

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## PREFACE

Like the first edition, this second edition of *Modern English: A Practical Reference Guide* presents detailed information about current English usage, some of which will not be found in other grammar books. Although reference is made to spoken English, the emphasis of this text is on *written* English, both formal and informal.

The second edition of this reference text is the product of more than twenty-five years of experience with non-native and native students at New York University, the University of Hawaii, and several New York City colleges. It is also the product of a much longer period of research in modern and traditional English grammar, current English usage, and general linguistics.

*Modern English* represents a synthesis of the old and the new. The conceptual framework for the book has been determined by modern grammatical theories (both structural and transformational). For this new edition, insights and details have been added from the large and important new grammar *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (Longman, 1985).

In general, American usage is recorded in this book; however, differences between American and British usage have been pointed out. Also, different levels and varieties of usage have been accounted for.

In the preparation of this book, I had in mind the needs of teachers of non-native students and those of advanced learners. For this reason there is a heavy concentration on grammatical usages that continue to trouble non-native students: articles, verb forms, prepositions and idioms, and such complex structures as dependent clauses and verbal constructions.

Native speakers of English should also find *Modern English* valuable because of its realistic description of the English language, which takes into account the many complexities of the language that often do not fit into the simple generalizations made by most grammar books, whether traditional or modern.

In this second edition, I have retained the simple organization of the first edition—parts of speech, clauses, verbal constructions—and I have kept the same systematic classifications within each chapter. Some changes also have been made: (1) explanations have been made clearer and oversimplifications have been corrected; (2) some examples have been changed to make clearer the points they are illustrating, and to avoid having them interpreted as sexist; (3) some charts have been made visually clearer; (4) usage notes have been added, especially to distinguish formal from informal usage and American from British usage; (5) cross references have been added.

Chapters 1 to 8, on parts of speech, have been influenced by concepts from structural linguistics—that words in a sentence can be classified according to their form and/or the way they pattern in a sentence. I therefore include in my description of each part of speech *all* the structural characteristics that can be observed as a word patterns in a sentence: the function, position, form, and the “markers” that signal a part of speech.

For the sake of simplicity of presentation, I have included a description of structure words—determiners, auxiliaries, intensifiers, etc.—under the part of speech where they have been traditionally classified. However, I have pointed out their role in signaling a structure. Also, I have followed the traditional practice of labeling the prepositions and the conjunctions as parts of speech because of their connective function, but have treated them differently from the other parts of speech.

Chapters 10 to 12, on clauses and verbal constructions, are based on an important concept from transformational grammar—that most complex syntactic structures are derived from simple basic sentences. In the description of clauses and verbal constructions, therefore, the changes from the original subject-verb-complement base are pointed out. This kind of description helps the learner become aware of how such structures serve as grammatical shapes for predications. In addition, other features of usage in connection with each structure are given: position, punctuation, level and variety of usage, and possible semantic content. Thus the description goes beyond grammar to the broader area of writing, where stylistic choices are involved.

The appendix to *Modern English* includes rules for punctuation and spelling as well as a glossary and an alphabetical list of irregular verbs.

The workbooks that accompany *Modern English* are correlated with the chapters in this reference book. The exercises on the parts of speech in Part I concentrate on word forms, position, and other problems connected with the use of a particular part of speech. The exercises on the syntactic structures in Part II are of a transformational type. Students combine sentences or clauses in order to become aware of the changes from the subject-verb-complement core and in order to practice using correct introductory words for each structure. They are also given practice in such matters as the position and punctuation of each structure, possible substitutions for the structure, and possible reduction of the structure. The purpose of these exercises is to enable students to write not only correct but effective sentences and to prepare them for the next stage of writing, the development of the paragraph and the entire essay.

A long overdue note of thanks is extended to Baxter Hathaway, whose *Writing Mature Prose: The Mastery of Sentence Structure* started the line of thinking that led to the writing of *Modern English*.

A final note of appreciation is due to Nancy Leonhardt of Regents/Prentice Hall for seeing this second edition through the various stages of publication, and to production editor Rachel J. Witty of Letter Perfect, Inc., for the meticulous care with which the book was produced.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION TO PARTS OF SPEECH

---

English sentences consist of predications—something is said, or *predicated*, about a subject. The main grammatical divisions of a sentence are therefore the subject and the predicate.

---

<b>Subject</b>	<i>The boy</i> (who or what is being talked about)
<b>Predicate</b>	<i>threw the ball into the water.</i> (what is being said about the subject)

---

Further classifications in a sentence are made according to the *function* each word has in the subject-predicate relationship. Each of these functions is classified as a different part of speech. The words that form the *central core* of the sentence—around which all the other words “cluster”—are the parts of speech known as nouns (or pronouns) and verbs; the words that *modify* the central core words are the parts of speech called adjectives and adverbs; the words that show a particular kind of *connecting relationship* between these four parts of speech are called prepositions and conjunctions.

### **PARTS OF SPEECH FORMING THE CENTRAL CORE**

The central core of a sentence, the part that is absolutely necessary for a complete sentence, consists of the *most important word in the subject* (often called the “*simple subject*”) plus either one of the following parts of the predicate:

1. A *predicating* word, which expresses action or some other kind of event. This word is frequently followed by another word that completes the predication (often called an *object*).

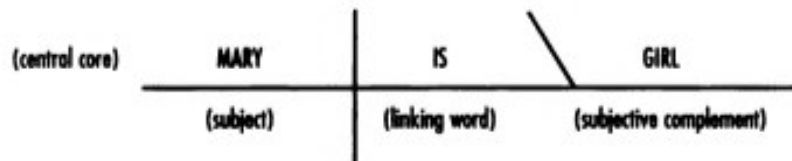
Sentence: *The boy threw the ball into the water.*



or

2. A *linking* word, which expresses state or condition. This linking word is *always* followed by another word which makes the actual predication (called a *subjective complement*).

Sentence: *Mary is a pretty girl.*



The predicating word or the linking word is often termed the *simple predicate*.

A word functioning as a subject, object, or subjective complement in a central core is called a *noun*<sup>2</sup> in the part-of-speech classification. Thus, **boy**, **Mary**, **girl** in the above sentences are all nouns. (Other uses of the noun in a sentence will be given later.)

Certain words may be used to avoid repeating a noun already mentioned (or understood). For example, instead of saying **The boy threw the ball**, we can say **He threw it**. These substitutes for nouns (**He** and **it** in the example just given) are termed *pronouns* in the part-of-speech classification.

The predicating word or the linking word is given the part-of-speech name of *verb*. The form and arrangement of a verb with its subject and its complement (what completes it) determines not only the kind of central core—or “sentence pattern”—a sentence will have, but also what *type* of sentence it will be:

<b>Statement</b>	He <i>is going</i> to the movies tonight.
<b>Question</b>	Is he <i>going</i> to the movies tonight?
<b>Exclamation</b>	What a beautiful day it <i>is!</i>
<b>Command or Request</b>	Please <i>close</i> the door. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In traditional diagramming, the words in the central core are placed on the same horizontal line. All other words are shown as tied to this core by slanting lines drawn down from the core words.

<sup>2</sup> The subjective complement may also be an adjective (*Mary is pretty*) or even an adverb (*Mary is here*).

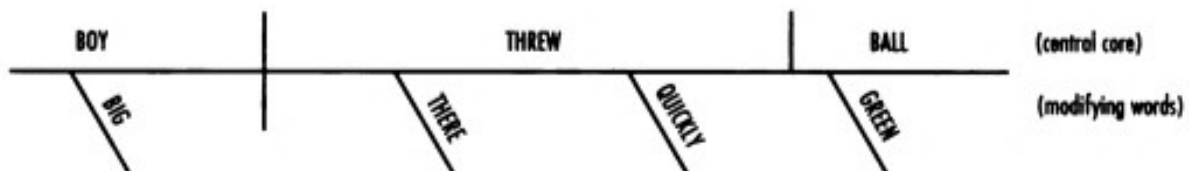
<sup>3</sup> A command or request (imperative sentence) is the only kind of sentence with no subject expressed; the word **you** is understood as the subject.

### PARTS OF SPEECH THAT MODIFY<sup>4</sup>

If we go back to the central core of our sentence **The boy threw the ball into the water**



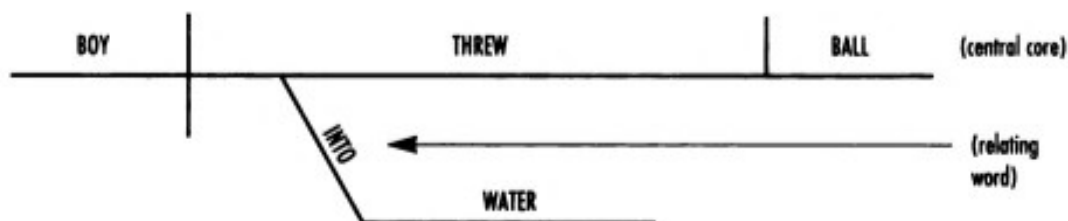
we find that we can attach further description to each of these words and thereby narrow them down, or *modify* them. Thus we can get



Those words that modify the nouns are called *adjectives* (**big, green**); those that modify the verb are called *adverbs* (**there, quickly**).

### PARTS OF SPEECH THAT EXPRESS A CONNECTING RELATIONSHIP

Certain words express a relationship of position, direction, time, etc., between two other words. In the sentence used above, we can join **water** with **threw** by **into** to show direction.



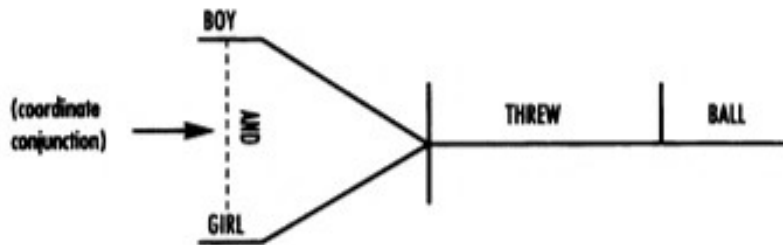
A word like **into** that indicates a relationship between two other words is called a *preposition*.

Another type of relating word, the *conjunction*, does one of two things:

1. It connects words or groups of words that are *equal grammatically* (*coordinate conjunction*).

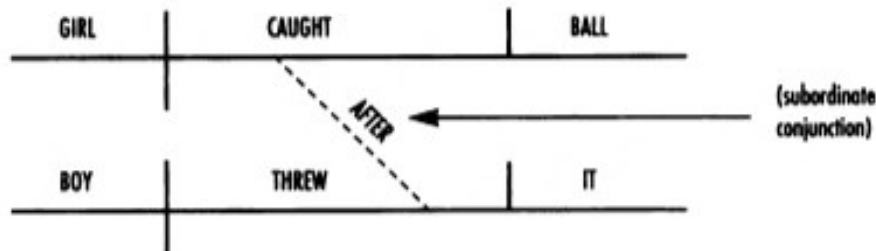
Sentence: *The boy and the girl threw the ball.*

<sup>4</sup> Another term for *modify* is *qualify*.



2. It connects groups of words that are *not equal grammatically* (*subordinate conjunction*).

Sentence: *The girl caught the ball after the boy threw it.*



In presenting parts of speech, traditional grammarians often include another part of speech, the interjection. However, since the interjection is simply some expression of emotion or feeling (surprise, pleasure, pain, etc.) usually occurring at the beginning of the sentence (**oh**, **hurrah**, **ouch**) and does not perform any grammatical function, this part of speech will not be treated further in this text.

In the chapters that follow, each part of speech will first be classified into its various types. Such classifications will be based chiefly on differences in structural form or in grammatical behavior. After that, the part of speech will be described according to the observable signals that operate the grammar: function, position, form, markers. Under function will be a further consideration of how a part of speech serves either as part of the central core (noun or pronoun, verb), or a modifier (adjective, adverb), or a connector (preposition, conjunction). Under form will be included (1) inflectional endings, that is, endings for grammatical purposes (for example, **-s** for plural nouns, **-ed** for past verbs); and (2) derivational endings, or suffixes that indicate the part of speech (for example, **-tion** for a noun, **-ize** for a verb). Under markers will be included the kinds of words that act as signals for parts of speech that follow (for example, **the** before a noun; **very** before an adjective or adverb).<sup>5</sup>

From the discussion of these parts of speech we will see that only nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs have special inflectional and derivational endings and use special markers for identification. The great bulk of our vocabulary falls into these four parts of speech, and new words enter into these categories only.

<sup>5</sup> The "meaning" of each part of speech will not be given in this text, since we feel that such a definition is less useful in identifying a part of speech than a study of observable signals is. Because of the tendency in English for many words to shift freely from one part of speech to another (especially from noun to verb or from verb to noun), the same word may actually belong to several parts of speech. Thus, in the sentence **The ship sails tomorrow**, **sails** is a verb; in **The sails of the boat are white**, **sails** is a noun. This is why a meaning-based definition, such as "a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing," is often more confusing than helpful.