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Grammar for Teachers

A Guide to American English for Native
and Non-Native Speakers

Second Edition

 Springer

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Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of *Grammar for Teachers: A Guide to American English for Native and Non-Native Speakers* was the result of my frustrations over many years of teaching structure courses and not being able to find an appropriate grammar text for the pre-service and in-service teachers enrolled in these classes. The students in these courses represented a variety of teaching backgrounds: pre-service teachers, ESL and EFL teachers at all levels and teaching in all types of programs, native and non-native speakers of English, content-area teachers with ESL students in their classes needing additional certification or endorsement, and many others. Some of these students had a strong knowledge of English grammar but had difficulties in applying their knowledge to real-life discourse. Other students' exposure had been limited to lessons in "correctness," and they were generally unaware of which language features were central to teaching ESL/EFL learners. And for some students, this was their first course in grammar. The challenge was to find a way to convey the essentials of American English grammar clearly, to engage students actively in their own learning and understanding of grammar as applicable to ESL/EFL learners, to motivate them to undertake perceptive analyses of grammatical elements and structures, and to develop an understanding of ESL/EFL learner needs and difficulties.

Since the first edition, I have continued to teach these various populations of pre-service and in-service teachers. In using *Grammar for Teachers* over the years in my classes, I became acutely aware of many ways to substantially improve the book. In addition, many colleagues, both in the United States and overseas who were also using *Grammar for Teachers*, encouraged me to revise the text and offered numerous suggestions for improvement.

My overall aim in writing the first edition of *Grammar for Teachers* was to make grammar accessible and comprehensible, and this aim has not changed. The text encourages users to develop a solid understanding of the use and function of the grammatical structures in American English so that they may better appreciate the language difficulties of ESL/EFL learners. The underlying premise is that teachers of ESL/EFL learners need to understand how English works from a practical,

everyday approach of “What does the learner need to know in order to produce X?” When teachers understand the grammar of American English and the problems and needs of ESL/EFL learner, they are in a better position to teach and explain elements of grammar.

Like the first edition, *Grammar for Teacher* reviews essential grammar structures clearly and concisely. The text approaches grammar from a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach and focuses on the structures of grammar of greatest importance to ESL/EFL learners. *Grammar for Teachers* encourages users to tap into their own, generally subconscious, knowledge of the grammar of English and make it a conscious knowledge that they can apply to their own varied teaching settings. The text strives to make the study of grammar interesting and relevant by presenting grammar in context and by using authentic material from a variety of sources. Discussions of areas of potential difficulties for ESL/EFL learners are included throughout the text. *Grammar for Teachers* also explores differences in forms accepted in formal versus casual or informal writing and speaking.

The general design and contents of the book have not changed. In each chapter, users work through Discovery Activities that encourage them to explore for themselves different elements of grammar and to consider how these elements work together to form meaningful discourse. Additional Practical Activities at the end of each chapter provide more practice on structures presented in that chapter. Included in the Practice Activities are samples of learner errors and error analysis exercises. These exercises expose users to authentic ESL/EFL learner discourse at different levels of proficiency and from different native languages, thereby affording them opportunities to practice focusing on targeted errors.

While the design and contents remain the same, I have made substantial improvements in this second edition including: (1) rewritten and reworked material for concision and clarity throughout; (2) the use of the decimal system of numbering for section headings; (3) reorganization of content in various chapters for improved flow and more logical development; and (4) corrections of previous errors. I firmly believe that this new edition of *Grammar for Teacher* makes grammar even more accessible and comprehensible.

Specifically, new in this edition, users will find:

- updated information on current language use
- new teacher-created practice sentences
- new authentic excerpts for practice and discussion
- clearer examples throughout
- expanded discussion of the different types of adverbs
- changes in Discovery Activities to make them easier to understand and complete
- additional Discovery Activities
- reworked Answer Keys
- corrected and expanded appendices
- a new appendix of *wh*-question words

At this point, I would also like to respond to a question I increasingly encounter when I say I have written a grammar textbook for educators, namely “Why have a grammar text when we have the Internet?” Yes, it is true that there is a great deal of material available on the Internet, and, yes, the Internet is an invaluable resource. However, there are several reasons why a text such as *Grammar for Teachers* remains vital. Although the Internet provides many answers to grammar questions, it is not a comprehensive single, organized guide. Furthermore, when using a search engine, we are provided with a multitude of links to a variety of sources, not necessarily of equal quality. The grammar discussions are not always accurate or consistent, and do not provide a unified, logical approach to grammar appropriate for pre-service and in-service ESL/EFL teachers. There is also a noticeable dearth of learning activities such as the ones in the text.

I do encourage users of *Grammar for Teachers* to view the Internet as a resource to supplement the explanations of grammatical structures, examples, and discussions. Previous users will see, for instance, that in there is no longer Appendix A with a long list of irregular English verbs since such lists are readily available on the Internet. What I have retained are the patterns irregular verbs follow since this information is not as easily located.

Please note that while I realize that in many cases the terminology in the United States is changing from ESL (English as a Second Language) student to ELL (English language learner) or EL (English learner) and am aware of the issues surrounding ESL, I have chosen to retain this label because it is the most general and most widely recognized acronym globally.

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Contents

1	What Is Grammar?	1
1.1	Section 1: Grammarians and Grammar	1
1.2	Section 2: Language and Change	4
1.3	Section 3: Linguists and Grammar	6
1.3.1	Language Is Rule-Governed	7
1.4	Section 4: Prescriptive Grammar and Descriptive Grammar	10
1.4.1	Prescriptive Grammar	10
1.4.2	Descriptive Grammar	13
1.5	Summary	15
1.6	Practice Activities	16
1.7	Answer Key	18
2	Morphology: Words and Their Parts	21
2.1	Section 1: Word Classes	21
2.1.1	Context and Function	24
2.1.2	Parts of Speech or Lexical Categories	26
2.1.3	Major Parts of Speech	30
2.2	Section 2: Morphology	33
2.2.1	Bound and Free Morphemes	34
2.2.2	Derivational and Inflectional Morphemes	35
2.3	Summary	38
2.4	Practice Activities	40
2.5	Answer Key	42
3	The Noun Phrase	45
3.1	Section 1: Identifying Nouns	45
3.1.1	Semantic Clues	46
3.1.2	Structural Clues	47
3.1.3	Morphological Clues	47
3.2	Section 2: Count, Non-Count, and Crossover Nouns	49
3.2.1	Count Nouns	49
3.2.2	Non-Count Nouns	50

3.2.3	Crossover Nouns	55
3.3	Section 3: Structure Words that Signal Nouns	56
3.3.1	Noun Signals	56
3.4	Section 4: Pronouns	65
3.4.1	Types of Pronouns	66
3.5	Summary	72
3.6	Practice Activities	74
3.7	Answer Key	78
4	Adjectives and Adverbs	81
4.1	Section 1: Adjectives	81
4.1.1	Semantic Clues	81
4.1.2	Morphological Clues	83
4.1.3	Structural Clues	88
4.1.4	Order of Adjectives	91
4.1.5	Special Types of Adjectives	93
4.2	Section 2: Adverbs	99
4.2.1	<i>-ly</i> Adverbs	100
4.2.2	Subclasses of Adverbs	102
4.3	Summary	109
4.4	Practice Activities	110
4.5	Answer Key	115
5	Overview of Verbs and Verb Phrases: The Heart of the Sentence	119
5.1	Section 1: Identifying Verbs	119
5.1.1	Semantic Clues	120
5.1.2	Morphological Clues	120
5.1.3	Structural Clues	120
5.2	Section 2: Main Verbs Versus Auxiliary Verbs	121
5.2.1	The Primary Auxiliary Verbs <i>Have, Be, Do</i>	123
5.3	Section 3: Transitive and Intransitive Verbs	130
5.3.1	Transitive Verbs	130
5.3.2	Intransitive Verbs	136
5.3.3	Verbs that Are Transitive and Intransitive	137
5.3.4	Linking Verbs	138
5.4	Section 4: Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives	139
5.4.1	Verb/Gerund Variations	142
5.5	Section 5: Phrasal Verbs	143
5.5.1	Phrasal Verbs Versus Verb + Preposition/Adverb	144
5.5.2	Types of Phrasal Verbs	147
5.6	Summary	151
5.7	Practice Activities	152
5.8	Answer Key	156

6	Time, Tense, and Aspect of Verbs.	163
6.1	Section 1: Verbs and Inflections.	163
6.1.1	Time, Tense, and Aspect.	164
6.2	Section 2: Present	166
6.2.1	Simple Present.	166
6.2.2	Present Progressive.	168
6.3	Section 3: Past.	172
6.3.1	Simple Past.	172
6.3.2	Past Progressive.	175
6.4	Section 4: Future	178
6.4.1	<i>Will</i>	179
6.4.2	<i>Be Going To</i>	180
6.4.3	Present Progressive for Future	182
6.4.4	Future Progressive	183
6.5	Section 5: The Perfect	184
6.5.1	Present Perfect.	184
6.5.2	Past Perfect.	188
6.5.3	Future Perfect	190
6.5.4	Present Perfect Progressive, Past Perfect Progressive, and Future Perfect Progressive	191
6.6	Summary	194
6.7	Practice Activities	196
6.8	Answer Key	203
7	Modal Auxiliary Verbs and Related Structures	211
7.1	Introduction.	211
7.2	Section 1: Meanings and Use	211
7.2.1	Ability	213
7.2.2	Permission and Polite Requests	215
7.2.3	Possibility or Probability Present Time	216
7.2.4	Possibility or Probability Past Time	217
7.2.5	Necessity or Obligation.	220
7.2.6	Prohibition	223
7.2.7	Advice or Suggestion	225
7.2.8	Expectation	227
7.2.9	Unfulfilled Expectation, Mistake	228
7.3	Section 2: <i>Would</i> and the Conditional.	230
7.3.1	<i>Would</i>	230
7.3.2	<i>Will</i>	230
7.3.3	<i>Would</i> and the Conditional	231
7.4	Summary	234
7.5	Practice Activities	236
7.6	Answer Key	240

8	Basic Sentence Patterns and Major Variations	243
8.1	Section 1: Types of Sentence Constituents	243
8.1.1	Noun Phrases	244
8.1.2	Prepositional Phrases	245
8.1.3	Verb Phrases	245
8.1.4	Adjective and Adverb Phrases	247
8.2	Section 2: Questions.	248
8.2.1	Yes/No Questions	248
8.2.2	<i>Wh</i> -Questions	249
8.3	Section 3: The Passive	255
8.3.1	The Passive and Tense	256
8.3.2	The Passive Versus the Active.	260
8.3.3	<i>Get</i>	261
8.3.4	Understanding Passive Use	261
8.4	Section 4: Substitution	262
8.4.1	Substitution and the First Auxiliary Rule.	262
8.4.2	Substitution and Inversion.	263
8.5	Summary	266
8.6	Practice Activities	268
8.7	Answer Key	273
9	Compound Sentences and Introduction to Complex Sentences: Adverbial Clauses	279
9.1	Section 1: Compound Sentences	279
9.1.1	Clauses Versus Phrases.	279
9.1.2	Compound Sentences and Coordinators.	280
9.1.3	Transition Words or Phrases	283
9.1.4	Sentence Position and Punctuation	283
9.2	Section 2: Complex Sentences.	286
9.2.1	Complex Sentences and Multiple Subordinate Clauses.	286
9.2.2	Subordinate Clauses and Word Order	287
9.2.3	Adverbial Clauses of Time	288
9.2.4	Adverbial Clauses of Contrast	291
9.2.5	Adverbial Clauses of Place	292
9.2.6	Adverbial Clauses of Cause.	293
9.2.7	Adverbial Clauses of Result	294
9.2.8	Adverbial Clause of Purpose	296
9.2.9	Adverbial Clauses of Condition	297
9.2.10	Adverbial Clauses of Manner	301
9.3	Section 3: Reduced Adverbial Clauses	303
9.3.1	Reducing Adverbial Clauses	303
9.4	Summary	305
9.5	Practice Activities	305
9.6	Answer Key	310

- 10 Complex Sentences Continued: Relative Clauses** 313
 - 10.1 Section 1: Relative Clauses and Relative Pronouns. 313
 - 10.1.1 Essential and Nonessential Relative Clauses 314
 - 10.1.2 Relative Pronouns as Subjects and Objects 317
 - 10.1.3 Omission of Relative Pronouns 322
 - 10.1.4 Building Longer Complex Clauses 325
 - 10.2 Section 2: Relative Adverbs 327
 - 10.2.1 Relative Pronouns Instead of Relative Adverbs 328
 - 10.3 Section 3: Reduced Relative Clauses 331
 - 10.3.1 Reducing Relative Clauses 331
 - 10.3.2 Reducing Passive Relative Clauses. 332
 - 10.4 Summary 334
 - 10.5 Practice Activities 335
 - 10.6 Answer Key 340

- 11 Complex Sentences Continued: Noun Clauses** 345
 - 11.1 Section 1: Noun Clauses. 345
 - 11.1.1 *That* Noun Clauses. 346
 - 11.1.2 The Different Functions of *That*. 352
 - 11.1.3 Noun Clauses Derived from Questions 354
 - 11.2 Section 2: Reported Speech. 357
 - 11.2.1 Word Order in Reported Speech 359
 - 11.2.2 Changes Between Direct Speech and Reported
Speech 359
 - 11.2.3 Other Patterns in Reported Speech 362
 - 11.2.4 Reported Speech as More Than a Mirror Image. 363
 - 11.3 Summary 365
 - 11.4 Practice Activities 366
 - 11.5 Answer Key 370

- 12 Verbal Constructions** 373
 - 12.1 Section 1: Gerunds and Gerund Phrases 373
 - 12.1.1 Possessive Gerunds 376
 - 12.2 Section 2: Participles and Participial Phrases 377
 - 12.2.1 Types of Participles 377
 - 12.2.2 Sentence Position of Participial Phrases 379
 - 12.2.3 Functions of Participial Phrases 380
 - 12.2.4 Time in Participial Phrases 384
 - 12.3 Section 3: Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases 386
 - 12.3.1 Perfect Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases 387
 - 12.3.2 Sentence Patterns with Infinitive Phrases. 388
 - 12.3.3 Base Verbs or “Bare Infinitives”
and Causative Verbs. 390

12.4	Summary	393
12.5	Practice Activities	393
12.6	Answer Key	396
Appendix A: Some Patterns of Common Irregular Verbs		401
Appendix B: The Eight Functions of the Inflectional Morphemes		405
Appendix C: Essential Spelling Rules: Inflections		407
Appendix D: The Minor Categories: The Structure Words		409
Appendix E: Gerunds After Verbs		411
Appendix F: <i>Wh</i>-question Words		413
Appendix G: Common Adverbial Subordinators		415
Appendix H: Summary of Major Learner Difficulties		417
Glossary		421
Index		433