**English language terms – a glossary**

**terms used in the study of English language**

This glossary of English Language terms contains the vocabulary and the jargon you will need in any analysis of language and its use. These terms are needed in a number of different subjects: language and linguistics, communication skills, the analysis of prose and poetry, and even certain aspects of philosophy.

**Abbreviations**
letter(s) or shortened word used instead of a full word or phrase

**Accent**
the features of pronunciation which indicate the regional or the social identity of a speaker

**Acquisition**
the process by which language skills are developed – particularly in infancy

**Adjectives**
a word which modifies a noun or a pronoun

**Adverbs**
a word which modifies a verb, an adverb, or an adjective

**Agreement**
the grammatical logic and coherence between parts of a sentence

**Alliteration**
the repetition of consonant sounds – usually at the beginning of words

**Apostrophes**
a raised comma used to denote either possession or contraction

**Articles**
a word that specifies whether a noun is definite or indefinite

**Assonance**
the repetition of vowel sounds

**Audience**
the person or persons receiving a speech or piece of writing

**Brackets**
Curved or square punctuation marks enclosing words inserted into a text

**Capitals**
Upper-case letters used to indicate names, titles, and important words

**Clauses**
a structural unit of language which is smaller than the sentence but larger than phrases or words, and which contains a finite verb

**Cliché**
an over-used phrase or expression

**Colons**
a punctuation mark indicating a pause ranking between a semicolon and a full stop

**Commas**
a punctuation mark indicating a short pause in a sentence

**Conjunction**
a word which connects words or other constructions

**Consonant**
an alphabetic element other than a vowel

**Context**
the setting in which speech or writing takes place

**Dialect**
a form of speech peculiar to a district, class, or person

**Diglossia**
the existence of two official languages in a society

**Diphthong**
two vowel characters representing the sound of a single vowel

**Ellipsis**
the omission of words from a sentence

**Figure of speech**
expressive use language in non-literal form to produce striking effect

**Form**
the outward appearance or structure of language, as opposed to its function, meaning, or social use

**Full stop**
a punctuation mark indicating the end of a sentence

**Function**
the role language plays to express ideas or attitudes

**Grammar**
the study of sentence structure, especially with reference to syntax and semantics

**Grapheme**
the smallest unit in the writing system of a language

**Graphology**
the study of writing systems

**Homonyms**
words with the same spelling but with different meanings

**Hyphen**
a short horizontal mark used to connect words or syllables, or to divide words into parts

**Idiom**
a sequence of words which forms a whole unit of meaning

**Irony**
saying [or writing] one thing, whilst meaning the opposite

**Intonation**
the use of pitch in speech to create contrast and variation

**Jargon**
the technical language of an occupation or group

**Language change**
the development and changes in a language

**Lexis**
the vocabulary of a language, especially in dictionary form

**Metaphor**
a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another

**Metonymy**
a figure of speech in which an attribute is substituted for the whole

**Morpheme**
the smallest unit of meaning in grammar

**Morphology**
a branch of grammar which studies the structure of words

**Narrator**
the person (named or unknown) who is telling a story

**Noun**
a word which names an object

**Onomatopoeia**
a word that sounds like the thing it describes

**Oxymoron**
a figure of speech which yokes two contradictory terms

**Paradox**
a figure of speech in which an apparent contradiction contains a truth

**Paragraph**
a distinct passage of writing which is unified by an idea or a topic

**Parenthesis**
a word, clause or even sentence which is inserted into a sentence to which it does not grammatically belong

**Participle**
a word derived from a verb and used as an adjective or a noun

**Parts of speech**
the eight common parts of speech are the verb, noun, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, conjunction, and interjection

**Phonetics**
the study of the production, transmission, and reception of speech sounds

**Phonology**
a study of the sounds in any language

**Phrase**
a group of words, smaller than a clause, which forms a grammatical unit

**Point of view**
a term from literary studies which describes the perspective or source of a piece of writing

**Preposition**
a word which governs and typically precedes a noun or a pronoun

**Pronoun**
a word that can substitute for a noun or a noun phrase

**Punctuation**
a system of marks used to introduce pauses and interruption into writing

**Received pronunciation**
the regionally neutral, prestige accent of British English

**Semantics**
the study of linguistic meaning

**Semicolon**
a punctuation mark which indicates a pause longer than a comma, but shorter than a colon

**Sentence**
a set of words which form a grammatically complete statement, usually containing a subject, verb, and object

**Simile**
a figure of speech in which one thing is directly likened to another

**Slang**
informal, non-standard vocabulary

**Speech**
the oral medium of transmission for language

**Spelling**
the convention governing the representation of words by letters in writing systems

**Standard English**
a dialect representing English speech and writing comprehensible to most users

**Structure**
the arrangement of parts or ideas in a piece of writing

**Style**
aspects of writing (or speech) which have an identifiable character generally used in a positive sense to indicate ‘pleasing effects’

**Stylistic analysis**
the study of stylistic effects in writing

**Symbol**
an object which represents something other than its self

**Synonym**
a word which means (almost) the same as another

**Syntax**
the arrangement of words to show relationships of meaning within a sentence

**Tense**
the form taken by a verb to indicate time (as in past-present-future)

**Text**
any piece of writing or object being studied

**Tone**
an author’s or speaker’s attitude, as revealed in ‘quality of voice’ or ‘selection of language’

**Verb**
a term expressing an action or a state of being

**Vocabulary**
the particular selection or types of words chosen in speech or writing

**Vowel**
the open sounds made in speech – as (mainly) distinct from consonants

**Writing**
the use of visual symbols to represent words which act as a code for communication

# language, grammar, and literary terms

## a glossary of grammatical terminology, definitions and examples - sounds and literary effects in language, speaking, writing, poetry..

This glossary of linguistics, literary and grammatical terms is aimed to be helpful for writers, speakers, teachers and communicators of all sorts, in addition to students and teachers of the English language seeking:

1. to understand the different effects of written and spoken language - what they are called, from a technical or study standpoint,
2. to develop variety, sensitivity, style and effectiveness in your own use of language - written and spoken - for all sorts of communications, whatever your purposes, and
3. to improve understanding and interpretation of the meaning of [words](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#word-definitions) without having to look them up in a dictionary.

There are very many different effects of written and spoken language. Most people know what an [acronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#acronyms-definitions) is, or a [palindrome](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#palindrome-definitions-examples). But what is a [glottal stop](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#glottal-stop-definitions-examples)? What is a [tautology](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#tautology-definitions-examples), or a [gerund](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#gerund-meanings-examples)? What is [alliteration](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#alliteration-meaning) and [onomatopoeia](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#onomatopoeia-definitions-examples)? What are the meanings of [prefixes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#prefix-definitions-examples), such as [hypo/hyper](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#hypo-hyper-prefix)and [meta](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#meta-prefix-meaning), and [suffixes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#suffix-definitions-meanings) such as [ology](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#ology-suffix-meanings) and [logue](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#logue-suffix-meanings)?

Words alone convey quite basic meaning. Far more feeling and mood is conveyed in the way that words are put together and pronounced - whether for inspiration, motivation, amusement, leadership, persuasion, justification, clarification or any other purpose.

The**way we use language** - in addition to the language we use - is crucial for effective communications and understanding.

The **way others use language** gives us major insights as to motives, personalities, needs, etc.

The study and awareness of linguistics helps us to know ourselves and others - why we speak and write in different ways; how language develops; and how so many words and ways of speaking from different languages share the same roots and origins.

Also, our technical appreciation of language is a big help to understanding language more widely, and particularly word meanings that we might not have encountered before.

For example why is a [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#prefix-definitions-examples) so significant in language? And a [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#suffix-definitions-meanings)?

Knowing these and many other aspects of linguistics can dramatically assist our overall understanding of language, including new words, even foreign words, which we might never have seen before.

Some of these language terms and effects are vital for good communications. Others are not essential, but certainly help to make language and communications more interesting, textured and alive - and when language does this, it captivates, entertains and moves audiences more, which is definitely important for professional communicators.

Note that many of these words have meanings outside of language and grammar, and those alternative non-linguistic definitions are generally not included in this glossary.

## listing of terms for grammatical, literary, language, vocal and written effects

**a** - the [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) 'a' is grammatically/technically 'the indefinite article' (compared with the word ['the'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22the-definite-article), which is 'the definite article') - for example 'A bird fell out of the sky', or 'Muddy children need a bath'. This use of the word a is derived from old English 'an', which is a version of 'one'.

**A** - usually capitalized, 'A' is a common substitute word or ['placeholder name'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22placeholder-name-definitions) used where the speaker/writer finds it easier not to use the actual word/words, for example and especially in phrases such as 'My car simply gets me from A to B', or 'Tit-for-tat is when person A hits person B, and so person B hits person A in return', or 'Woman A has been married for 5 years; woman B has been...'

**a-** - the letter 'a' is [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), with various meanings, seen in different stages of word development from various languages, notably including the meanings: 'to', 'towards', 'on', 'at', 'of', or to express intensity, or being in a state of.., etc., for example afoot, awake, accursed, abreast, ajar, announce, etc. Not all words which begin with 'a' are using the 'a' prefix in this way.

**abbreviation** - a shortened [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) or phrase. This can be done by various methods, notably:

* using the initial letter(s) of a multi-word name or phrase - for example, BBC for British Broadcasting Corporation, or SA for South Africa, or ATM for automated teller machine, TV for television, CD for compact disc; or LOL for laughing out loud or SWALK for sealed with a loving kiss, (the latter two also technically being [acronyms](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22acronyms-definitions)).
* omitting some or all the vowels of the word or words - for example, Rd for Road, or St for Street, or Saint, or Dr instead of Doctor, or Mr instead of Mister, or Sgt instead of Sergeant,
* omitting and/or replacing letters which best enable those remaining to convey the full word, often also for euphonic reasons (i.e., the sound is pleasing to speak/hear) or otherwise clever phonetically (how it sounds), or clever visually - for example: bike for bicycle, or fridge for refrigerator, or pram for perambulator (perambulate means walk, formally or amusingly), or BBQ for barbecue, or SFX for sound effects - and in more recent years especially in electronic messaging using mixtures of letters and numbers, such as L8 for late, GR8 for great, 2 meaning to/too, B4 for before, etc.
* omitting the beginning of a word or words - for example phone for telephone.
* omitting a word-ending or phrase-ending - for example doc for doctor, amp for amplifier or ampere, artic for articulated lorry, or op for operation, or zoo for zoological garden.
* combining parts of two words to form a new word, usually being a blended meaning as well as a blended word, also called a [portmanteau word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22portmanteau/portmateau-word) - for example brunch for breakfast, and smog for smoke and fog. Portmanteau words are not commonly regarded as abbreviations, but they certainly are.

Many abbreviations, after widespread and popular adoption, become listed in dictionaries as new words in their own right. The full original versions of many such abbreviations become forgotten, so that they are not generally regarded as abbreviations (for example the words zoo, taxi, phone).

**acronym** - an existing or new [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) that is spelt from the initial letters, in correct order, of the words of a phrase or word-series, for example NIMBY (Not In My Back-Yard) and SCUBA (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus). Technically an acronym should be a real word or a new 'word' that is capable of pronunciation, otherwise it's merely an [abbreviation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22abbreviation-meanings). By definition, all acronyms are also abbreviations. Also technically an acronym should be formed from the initial letter of all words in the phrase or word-series. Commonly the rules are bent when acronyms are formed using the first and second letters (or more) from component words, and/or when words such as 'to' and 'the' and 'of' in the phrase or word-series do not contribute to the acronym, for example LASER (Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation). An acronym that is devised in reverse (i.e., its full meaning/interpretation refers directly or indirectly alludes to the abbreviated form) is called a bacronym, or backronym, or reverse acronym, for example [CRAP](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22CRAP-acronym) (Chronologically Ascending Random Pile), and DIARRHOEA (Dash In A Real Rush, Hurry Or Else Accident). See lots of useful and amusing [acronyms and bacronyms](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm).

**acrostic** - a puzzle or construction or cryptic message in which usually the first or last letters of lines of text, or possibly other individual letters from each line, spell something vertically, or less commonly diagonally, downwards, or upwards. From French acrostiche, and Greek akrostikhis, and the root Greek words akro, meaning end, and stikhos, meaning a row or line of verse. A notable and entertaining example of the use of acrostics in cryptic messaging is the case of British journalist Stephen Pollard, who reportedly registered his feelings about Richard Desmond's 2001 acquisition of his employer, the Daily Express, by spelling the words acrostically: 'F\*\*\* you Desmond', using the first letter of the sentences in his final lead article for the paper.

**accent** - accent refers to a distinctive way of pronouncing words, language or letter-sounds, typically which arise in regional and national language differences or [vernacular](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vernacular-meanings-definitions). For example 'an Australian accent'. Accent also refers to types of [diacritical marks](http://www.businessballs.com/diacriticalmarks.htm) inserted above certain letters in certain words to alter letter sound, for example in the word café. Accent may refer more generally to the mood or [tone](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tone-definitions) of speech or writing, or technically to emphasis in poetry, and also to musical emphasis, from where the word derives. The origins of the word accent are from Latin, accentus, tone/signal/intensity, from ad cantus, 'to' and 'song'.

**active** - in grammar, applying to a [verb's](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples)/[voice](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22voice-definitions-examples), active (contrasting with its opposite '[passive](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22passive-definitions-examples)') generally means that the [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples) is performing the action (to an [object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples)) - for example, 'The chef (subject) cooked (verb) dinner' (object)', (active voice/diathesis), rather than passive voice/diathesis: 'Dinner (object) was cooked (verb) by the chef' (subject), (passive voice/diathesis).

**adjective** - a 'describing word' for a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples) - for example big, small, red, yellow, fast, slow, peaceful, angry, high, low, first, last, dangerous, heart-warming, tender, brave, silly, smelly, sticky, universal.. There are tens of thousands of others, perhaps hundreds of thousands. A 'sister' term is [adverb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22adverbs-definitions-examples),

**adverb** - a word which describes a [verb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) - for example quickly, slowly, peacefully, dangerously, heart-warmingly, bravely, stickily, universally.

**-age** - a common [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings) added to word stems to create a noun, especially referring to the result of an action/verb, typically collective or plural noun that expresses a potential to be measurable, for example: wreckage, spillage; wastage, leverage, haulage, blockage, etc. Coin is extended to coinage, to produce a collective/plural noun from a singular noun. Out is extended to outage to produce a noun from a preposition.

**allegory**- a story or poem or other creative work which carries and conveys a hidden or underlying meaning, typically of a moral or philosophical nature. Originally from Greek, allos, other, and agoria, speaking. Allegorical refers to a work of this sort.

**alliteration** - where two or more words that are adjacent or close together begin with or feature strongly the same letters or sounds, for example, 'double-trouble bubbling under', or 'big black beanbag', or 'Zambia zoo's amazing zig-zagging zebras'. Alliteration is commonly used in poetry and other forms of writing which seeks to entertain or please people. This is because alliteration itself is a pleasing, almost musical, way of constructing words, both to speak and to hear. Shakespeare used alliteration a great deal in his plays and other works, as have most other great writers throughout history. Where alliteration involves repetition of syllables and prolonged sounds, rather than merely single consonants or vowel sounds, it may also be defined as [reduplication](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22reduplication-definition-examples).

**allonym** - this is a [pseudonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pseudonym-definitions-examples) which is actually a real name - specifically applying to 'ghostwriting' (where a professional writer writes a book or a newspaper article, etc., by agreement from the person whose name is being used to 'front' the piece) - an allonym also technically refers to the illicit use of another person's name in creating work which purports to be written by the named author, rather like a forger in art.

**allophone** - in grammar an allophone refers to variant of a single sound (a [phoneme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phoneme-meanings-definitions)) which is pronounced slightly differently to another variant. Examples of allophones are the different 'p' sounds in 'spin' and 'pin', and the different 't' sounds in 'table' and 'stab'. Commonly the differences between allophones so slight that most people are unaware of them and would consider the sounds to be identical. The word derives from Greek 'allos' meaning other.

**alphagram** - an [anagram](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22anagram-definitions) (although not necessarily a meaningful or even pronounceable word, as usually defined by the word anagram) in which the letters of the new word or phrase are in alphabetical order, such as the anagram 'a belt' for the source word 'table'.

**alphastratocus** - the @ symbol - more commonly called the [asperand](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22asperand-symbol-meanings).

**ambigram** - a relatively recent term for a 'wordplay' concept which dates back hundreds of years, an ambigram is a word or short phrase which can be read in two different ways (from two different perspectives or viewpoints) to produce two different words/phrases, or different forms of the same word/phrase. Commonly the second perspective is upside-down, and the different words/phrases are related, although neither of these features is an essential requirement of an ambigram. In modern times the ambigram has been popularized by the tattoo industry, and certain online/computer technologies which generate ambigram designs. Other less popular/obvious forms of ambigrams entail several different pairings of views, for example achieved by: background/negative/'figure-ground' (where the gaps between the letters are in the shape of other letters and produce a word/phrase); rotational (typically 180 degrees); 3D (three-dimensional effect); mirror images (sideways); language translation; circular letter chain (within which two different words have different starting and ending points); 'fractal tiled' (whereby zooming in or out of pixilated/tiled word-form produces new renderings); the 'natural' effect (requiring no great distortion - such as the lower-case lettered words 'suns', 'pod', 'bog', which read the same upside-down with little or no adaptation); and other variations. Ambigrams may comprise upper or lower case letters or a mixture. Some word combinations naturally produce more pleasing and legible ambigrams than others, requiring very little distortion of the letters. An early example of a 'natural' ambigram is the word 'chump', which in lower-case script lettering reads easily as the same word when viewed upside-down, and this example seems first to have been publicized in 1908. Interestingly and coincidentally the word 'ambigram' can be made very easily into an 'upside-down' type of ambigram.

**ampersand** - the 'and sign' (&). The word ampersand is a distorted derivation from 'and per se'. The symbol is a combination of the letters E and T, being the Latin word 'et' meaning 'and'. More detail about the [ampersand origins](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ampersand_origins_history).

**anagram** - a word or phrase created by rearranging the letters of a word or name or phrase, such as pea for ape, or teats for state. An anagram is more impressive when the new word/phrase cleverly or humorously relates to the source word/phrase, for example 'twelve plus one', is an anagram of 'eleven plus two', or the often-quoted 'dirty room' is an anagram of 'dormitory', and 'here come dots' is an anagram of 'the morse code'.

**analepsis** - more commonly called a 'flashback' or 'retrospective' - analepsis is narrative or action of a story before the 'present' time (in the work), usually for dramatic and explanatory purpose. The opposite is prolepsis. The term is broadly based on Greek medicinal term analeptikos, meaning 'restorative'.

**analogy/analogous/analogue** - refers to a comparison between two similar things, in a way as to clarify their differences, similarities, and their individual natures. As a communications concept, especially in learning/teaching, the use of analogies (which are similar to and encompass [metaphors](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) and [similes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples), extending to [stories](http://www.businessballs.com/stories.htm) and [fables](http://www.businessballs.com/aesopsfables.htm), etc) is extremely powerful. The use of analogies is also beneficial for memory and information retention. The word analogue refers a corresponding thing, and is used traditionally in describing technologies which replicate/record/measure things using mechanical means, as distinct from more modern electronic/digital methods, for example in describing types of watches, audio-recorders and players, etc. The words are from Greek 'analogos' - ana, 'according to', and logos, 'ratio'.

**ananym** - a type of [anagrammatic](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22anagram-definitions) word created by reversing the spelling of another word - for example Trebor, the confectionery company. Sadly it is difficult to find any other examples that are not scientifically or otherwise so obscure as to be utterly unremarkable. You will perhaps be able to invent better ones yourself.

**anaphor -**a word or phrase that refers to and replaces another word, or series of words, used earlier in a passage or sentence - for example: "I looked in the old cupboard in the bedroom at the top of the stairs but it was empty.." - here 'it' is the anaphor for 'the old cupboard in the bedroom at the top of the stairs'. Another example is "I will eat, go for a walk, then sit in the garden; do you want to do this too?.." - here 'this' is an anaphor for 'eat, go for a walk, then sit in the garden'. A simpler example is "John woke; he rubbed his eyes.." - here 'he' is an anaphor for John. An anaphor is generally used to save time and avoid unwanted repetition. See cataphor, where the replacement word precedes a later word.

**anaphora** - this has two (confusingly somewhat opposite) meanings, which probably stems from its Greek origin, meaning repetition. Firstly, simply, anaphora is the action of using an [anaphor](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22anaphor-definitions) (a replacement word such as it, he, she, etc) in referring to a previous word or phrase, to avoid repetition and to save time. Secondly, and rather differently, anaphora refers to the intentional use of repetition, specifically a writing/speaking technique in [rhetoric](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22rhetoric-definition), where repetition of a word or phrase is used for impact at the beginning of successive sentences or passages. For example: "People need clothes. People need shelter. People need food.." Here the repetition of 'people need' produces a dramatic effect. A further more famous example is Winston Churchill's WWII "We shall fight on the beaches" speech: "We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.." Here the dramatic repetition of 'we shall' and 'we shall fight' produces remarkable inspiring and motivational effect. The word [epistrophe](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22epistrophe-definitions-examples) refers to this effect when used at the end of sentences or clauses.

**anonym** - an anonymous person or publication of some sort, potentially extending to an anonymous internet/website posting.

**antanaclasis** - a sentence or statement which contains two identical words/phrases whereby the repeated word or phrase which means something quite different to the first use, for example: 'Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana,' (here the words 'flies like...' mean firstly 'passes similar to...' and secondly 'flies [the insects] enjoy eating...'). Another often-quoted example of antanaclasis is the motivational threat attributed to American football coach Vince Lombardi: 'If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired, with enthusiasm" (in which 'fired' firstly means 'motivated', and secondly means 'sacked', or dropped from the team). Antanaclasis is a form of [pun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pun-definitions-examples), and is commonly used to illustrate the confusing and ambiguous nature of language/communications, especially in studying psycholinguistics (how the mind works in processing language).

**anthropomorphism/anthropomorphic** - the attribution of human form or characteristics to non-human things, such as inanimate objects, or gods, or concepts such as the weather or economy, or a town or nation, or anything else that for dramatic/literary/humorous effect might be described or represented as having a human quality of some sort. For example the following are all very simple anthropomorphic expressions, or anthropomorphisms: a 'Happy Meal'; a 'friendly bar'; a 'weepy movie'; a 'computer that won't behave'; a 'dumb waiter'; a 'drink or chocolate bar that is my best friend'; 'music or art that speaks to me'; a sun image with a smiling face; a wind image of a person's face blowing hard; millions of cartoons and animations, such as cars with faces, or animals with human expressions and personalities; countless logos and brands which contain an image or icon with some sort of human quality or movement (a 'kicking K' for example, and anything with a smile or even wearing a hat); and all those digital media icons with faces. Anthropomorphism is everywhere, and plays a crucial part in human communications. (There that's another one... the suggestion that Anthropomorphism 'plays a part'..)

**antonym** - a word which is the opposite in meaning in relation to another, for example, fast and slow, high and low, husband and wife, dead and alive, etc., (from Greek anti, against, and onuma, a name). Interestingly the antonym of the word antonym is synonym (a word which means the same as or equates to another).

**aphorism** - a statement of very few words - for example a maxim or short memorable impactful quote - which expresses a point strongly, for example, 'No pain, no gain'.

**apocrypha/apochryphal** - writings which are not authentic (for example falsely cited quotations or extracts, etc) but which may be presented or considered authentic - especially applying to claimed biblical works or ancient Chinese writings, and increasingly a term which applies generally to any old writings that lack a claimed or asserted authenticity. The word is Greek originally meaning 'hidden writings', from apokruptein, 'hide away'.

**apophony** - this is a very broad term, referring simply to the alternation of sounds in a [word stem](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-stem-definitions) which produces different tenses, meanings or versions of the word, for example sing, sung, sang. Apophony is also called ablaut, alternation, gradation, internal inflection, internal modification, replacive morphology, stem alternation, stem modification, stem mutation, among other variants of these.

**apophasis** - a broad term for various types of communications and language techniques which infer or propose something by emphasizing what it is not, or by ironically rejecting or denying or introducing a notion, and then withdrawing or distancing oneself (the speaker) from the 'fact'. Examples are [paralipsis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Paralipsis-definition-examples) and [syllogism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22syllogism-definitions-examples), and the game 'twenty questions' and the general concept of 'by exception' and the 'process of elimination'.

**apophthegm/apothegm**- (helpfully the 'ph' and 'g' are silent - the word is pronounced 'appathem', emphasis on the first syllable - apothegm is the US-English spelling) - an apophthegm is a concise and very expressive saying, for example 'You get out what you put in', equating to an [aphorism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22aphorism-definitions), originally from Greek, apophthengesthai, meaning 'speak out'.

**apostrophe** - a punctuation mark (simply shown as ' ) which denotes ownership (as in John's books), or omitted letters (as in: you don't know, or rock'n'roll) or a quoted or significantly extracted/highlighted item (as in: the communication was worded very carefully because of 'political correctness'..)

**apposite/apposition** - where two similar references appear together, typically without a conjunction, for example, 'my son the doctor'.

**aptronym** - a person's name that matches his/her occupation or character, most obviously children's book characters such as the Mr Men series (Mr Messy, Mr Bump, etc), and extending to amusing fictitious examples such as roofer Dwayne Pipe, or parks supervisor Theresa Green, or yoga teacher Ben Dover, or hair-stylist Dan Druff. From apt, meaning appropriate, and Latin aptus meaning fitted. Apparently the term was first suggested by Franklin P Adams. Also called an aptonym or charactonym.

**argot** - a word referring to a secret coded language of some sort, notably but not exclusively used by criminals, for example [backslang](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22backslang-examples) or [cockney rhyming slang](http://www.businessballs.com/cockney.htm); argot ('argo') is originally a French/Spanish Catalan word for slang. Argo may also refer to jargon or terminology that is specific to a particular group or discipline, for example military folk, hobbyists, scientists, etc.

**articulation** - articulation refers to the formation of clear sounds in speech, including [vowels](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vowel-definitions) and more especially [consonants](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22consonants-definitions-examples). Technically this is analysed/achieved via the control of the airflow (of breathing while speaking) through, and by adjustment of, the various vocal organs and mouthparts, each of which produce a remarkably extensive range of possible sounds, which increases further when considering different cultures/languages around the world. Also technically, articulation - in referring to the use of airflow and vocal mouth-parts, and encompassing [phonation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phonation-definitions) - is one of the most important and fundamental ways by which the development and analysis of language are enabled. The word articulation is ultimately derived from Latin articulus, 'small connecting part'. See importantly ['places of articulation'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22places-of-articulation).

**ASCII** - (pronounced 'askee') stands for the American Standard Code for Information Interchange, established in the 1960s. ASCII is a widely used and prevalent system for coding letters and other characters for use on electronic text equipment, notably computers and the internet.

**asperand** - the @ sign - also called alphastratocus - now widely used in computing, notably within email addresses where it stands simply for 'at'. Originally the 'at' sign was an accounting term meaning 'at the rate of', for example: 10 widgets @ £3 each = £30 total.

**asterisk** - the star symbol (\*) commonly used to signify that a supplementary note follows (also signified by an asterisk), or quite separately to substitute letters in offensive words in published text.

**autoantonym/auto-antonym/autantonym** - one of two different words that have the same spelling (a [homograph](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22homograph-definitions)) but opposite meanings, for example, fast (quick moving or firmly fixed). The term is from Greek auto, meaning self, and [antonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22antonym-definitions), in turn from anti meaning against. Also called a [contranym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contranym-contronym-definitions-meanings), contronym, antagonym, antilogy, enantiodrome, self-antonym, addad, didd, and [Janus word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Janus-word-definitions-origins). This peculiar phnomenon, called 'enantionymy' and 'antilogy', attracts a high level of interest among linguists, lovers of language and wordplay trivia. Here are some examples: Cap (limit, stop, and add to, increase); Outstanding (satisfactory, standard exceeded, and unsatisfactory, standard not met); Oversight (a check, monitor, and a neglect, omission); Weather (endure, stand test of time, and erode, wear down or denude); Clip (join two or more things together as with a paper-clip, and divide something into two or more pieces, as in clip an article from the paper or clip someone's hair); Dust (remove a layer of powdery substance, and apply a layer of powdery substance, as in dusting crops or dusting for finger-prints); Trim (add to or embellish, as in trim the Christmas tree, and cut away something, as in trim hair or a hedge); Cleave (split apart or break, and stick or adhere); Ravish (to violently abuse, and to delight); Sanction (a permission, and a preventative penalty); Sanguine (cheerful and bloodthirsty); Bolt (fixed, secure in place, and move fast, run away); Garnish (add to, embellish or decorate, and remove from - as in legally serving notice to seize money or assets); Bound (stay or fixed, and move, as in leap or travelling); Left (gone, and remaining); Mad (angry about, and attracted to); Livid (angry, and pallid, lacking colour and spirit); Wind-up (start something, like a clock or an argument, and finish something, like proceedings or a talk); Blow-up (inflate, create, e.g., a balloon, and destroy with explosives). Further suggestions always welcome.

**autonym** - a word that describes itself (also called self-referential); for example noun is a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples), polysyllabic is [polysyllabic](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22polysyllabic-definitions), abbrv. is an abbreviation, and word is a word. Separately autonym refers to a person's real name, the opposite of a [pseudonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pseudonym-definitions-examples). And separately again, an autonym may be a name by which a social group or race of people refers to itself. From Greek auto, self.

**axiom** - a statement or proposition considered established, true, accepted, or a fact that is 'taken for granted'. For example: 'We need air to breathe,' or 'Many people find comfort in religion.' Seen critically, some axiomatic statements can be regarded as stating the obvious. Certain [tautologies](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tautology-definitions-examples) which seek to persuade people of a supposedly established viewpoint are commonly presented as being axiomatic, when in fact the basic assumption within the tautology is not actually an axiom, more a matter of opinion. Many [cliches](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cliche-clich%EF%BF%BD-definitions-examples) are offered as axioms, when actually often they are subjective, and opposing 'accepted' cliches exist. The word axiom derives from Greek 'axios', worthy.

**backslang** - an informal 'coded' language made of reversed words, or with reversed elements within words, used originally by groups of people seeking to talk openly yet secretively among other people who did not belong to the group, for example historically by market traders within hearing of customers, or by gangsters. Backslang has been at various times popular among teenagers, and exists as a 'reverse' coded secret slang language in many non-English-speaking cultures. Some backslang expressions enter mainstream language and dictionaries, such as the word yob, a disparaging term for a boy.

**bacronym/backronym** - a 'reverse acronym', i.e., an acronymic phrase or word-series which is constructed from its abbreviated form, rather than from its full form (as is the case with a conventional acronym). The abbreviated form of a bacronym is usually a recognizable word or name, whose full 'meaning' is constructed from words whose sequence and initial letters letters match the abbreviation, for example YAHOO = Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle, or IBM = I Blame Microsoft. The full form is commonly a humorous or clever or ironic reference to the word or name spelled by the abbreviation. The word bacronym/backronym is combination ([portmanteau](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22portmanteau/portmateau-word)) word made from back or backward and acronym. See the [acronyms and bacronyms listing](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm) for lots of examples.

**bathos** - in language, especially poetic and dramatic, a jarring and usually funny mood-change or anti-climax caused by unexpectedly introducing a crude/rough/basic notion immediately after a (usually much longer) sublime/inspiring/heady/exalted/or otherwise uplifting passage of words. The mood-shift is one of 'down to earth with a bump', as if to give the reader/audience suddenly a surprising sense of ordinariness, or ridiculous contrast, after first establishing an atmosphere of higher, grander thoughts and images. For example, "...the new vicar was making a deeply moving impression on the congregation, with a sermon of profound meaning, soaring inspiration, and heartfelt compassion. He paused dramatically, before delivering his final uplifting conclusion, and, re-tasting last night's vindaloo and half-bottle of brandy, was sick on a choirboy..."

**bilabial consonant** - a [consonant](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22consonants-definitions-examples) articulated with both lips. There are hundreds of technical variations of pronunciation. This is one example of a group of them. See [places of articulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22places-of-articulation) to understand where/how vocal word/letter sounds are made. See also the [International Phonetic Alphabet](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22International-Phonetic-Alphabet) and related [IPA chart (pdf)](http://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/international-phonetic-alphabet-2005.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) for diagrammatic explanation and detail of what these sounds are called, and the symbols used to denote them. It's fascinating. (The IPA chart is published here under the following terms of reproduction permission: IPA Chart, http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/ipachart.html, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 Unported License. Copyright © 2005 International Phonetic Association.)

**bullet point/bullet-points/bullets**- an increasingly popular and very effective way of presenting information, by which a series of (usually) brief sentences, each dealing with a single separate issue, are each prefaced by a large dot or other symbol (sometimes a bullet or arrow, or [asterisk](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22asterisk), or some other [icon](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22icon), to aid clarity of presentation and increase emphasis). The 'bullets' (the actual dots or marks) act like exclamation marks, but at the beginning rather than the end of the sentences. Some folk debate whether bullet points should follow grammatical rules for [sentences](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sentence-definition-examples) or not, i.e., begin with a capital letter, end with a full stop, etc., although in most usage bullet points do not, and actually for good effect need not, and so are unlikely to conform more in the future. Professional writers and presenters tend to support the view that there is an optimum number of bullet points when presenting information that is designed to persuade people and be retained, and this ranges between 3 and 7 points, suggesting that 5 points is a good safe optimum. Obviously where bullet points are used in different situations, such as detailed listings and extensive summaries, the notion of an optimum persuasive number no longer applies, and in these circumstances anyway numbered points are usually more beneficial and effective. Whatever, for hard-hitting brief presentations of information/arguments, bullet points are often an unbeatable format.

**cacophony/cacophonous** - in linguistics this refers to unpleasant sounding speech, words, or ugly discordant vocalizing. It is the opposite of euphony, and like euphony, cacophony is a significantly influential concept in the evolution of language, according to the principle that human beings throughout time have generally preferred to use and hear pleasing vocal sounds, rather than unpleasant ones. Euphonic words and sounds tend to flow more easily from the tongue and mouth than cacophonous utterings, and so this affects the way words and language evolve. The word is from Greek kakos, bad, and phone, sound. See [euphony](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22euphony-definitions-examples).

**cadence** - in linguistics cadence refers to the fall in pitch of vocalized sounds at the end of phrases and sentences, typically indicating an ending or a significant pause. It's from Latin cadere, to fall. More generally cadence may refer to [modulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22modulation-definitions) or [inflection](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22inflection-definitions) in the voice or speech delivery.

**CamelCase** - a style of text layout, popularized in the computer/internet age, which uses no spaces, instead relying on capital letters to show word beginnings. The term 'camel' alludes to humpy wordshapes.

**capitonym** - word which changes its meaning and pronunciation when capitalised; e.g. polish and Polish, august and August, concord and Concord - from capital (letter).

**cant** - a cant is a secret or coded language used by a group for secrecy, it equates to an argot.

**cataphor** - a word or phrase that refers to and replaces another word, or series of words, used later in a passage or sentence - for example: "It was empty; the old cupboard was bare.." - here 'it' is the cataphor for 'the old cupboard'. Another example is "When it had to compete against social networking, TV became less dominant.." - here 'it' is the cataphor for TV. See anaphor.

**cataphora** - the action of using a cataphor in writing or speech to avoid repetition, or for dramatic effect, i.e., the use of a replacement word in a passage instead of its subsequent equivalent. From Greek kata, down, but based on the same pattern as anaphora.

**clause** - technically in grammar a clause is a series of words which stands alone as a phrase which makes sense and conveys a meaning but which is shorter than a [sentence](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sentence-definition-examples). More loosely a clause is interpreted to mean a sentence or statement, especially in formal documents.

**cliche/cliché** - a written or spoken statement commonly and widely used by people in conversation, other speech, and written communications, generally regarded to lack original thought in application, although [ironic](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22irony-ironic-definitions-examples) or humorous use of cliches may be quite clever use of language. The use of cliches in high quality original professional written/printed/online communications, materials, presentations, books, media, and artistic works is generally considered to be rather poor practice. This is because cliches by their nature are unoriginal, uninspiring and worse may be boring, tedious and give the impression of lazy thoughtless creative work. There are thousands of cliches, and they appear commonly in day-to-day speech, emailing, texting, etc., and in all sorts of produced media such as newspapers, radio, TV, online, etc. Virtually everybody uses many cliches every day. The word is from French clicher, 'to stereotype'. Examples of cliches are sayings such as: 'That's life,' 'Easy come easy go,' 'Fit for a King,' 'All in a day's work, 'All's fair in love and war,' and 'Many a true word is spoken in jest'. Many [similes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples)have become very common cliches, for example: 'Quiet as a mouse,' 'Selling like hot cakes,' 'Went down like a lead balloon,' 'Dead as a dodo,' 'Fought like a lion,' 'Black as night,' and 'Quick as a flash.' Many [metaphors](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) have become popular cliches, for example: 'Pigs might fly,' 'Beyond the pale,' 'On cloud nine,' 'Gone for a Burton,' and 'The full Monty'. See lots more [examples of cliches and their origins](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm). A cliche is often alternatively and more loosely called an [expression](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22expression-definitions) or a [figure of speech](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22figure-of-speech-definitions-examples).

**cockney** - cockney refers to the dialect of traditional east-central London people ('eastenders', also called cockneys). Examples of cockney speech are heard widely in film and TV featuring London stereotypes of 'working class' people, for instance in the BBC soap Eastenders, films about Jack the Ripper, London gangster movies, 'The Sweeny', and other entertainment of similar genre. The cockney dialect features lots of 'dropped' consonant letters (commonly t, h, replaced by [glottal stops](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22glottal-stop-definitions-examples), due to the 'lazy' or 'efficient' speech style, for example words such as hunt, house, heat, cat and headache, are pronounced 'un', 'ouse', 'ea', 'ca' and 'edday', with glottal stops replacing the dropped letters. Also, the 'th' sound is often replaced by an 'f' or 'v' sound, for example in 'barf' (bath), 'muvva' (mother), and 'fing' (think). The term 'ain't' almost always replaces 'isn't'.

**cockney rhyming slang** - an old English slang 'coded' language, by which the replacement word/expression is produced via a (usually) two-word term, the second of which rhymes with the word to be replaced. Commonly only the first word of the replacement expression is used, for example, the word 'talk' is replaced by 'rabbit', from 'rabbit and pork', which rhymes with 'talk'. Other examples of cockney rhyming slang may retain the full rhyming expression, for example 'gin' is referred to as 'mother's ruin'. See lots more information and examples in the [cockney rhyming slang listing](http://www.businessballs.com/cockney.htm). Australian people use rhyming slang too, which is a development of the original cockney rhyming language. Many words have entered the English language from cockney rhyming slang, lots of which are not widely appreciated to have originated in this way, for example the terms 'scarper' (run away, from scapa flow, go), 'brassic' (penniless, from boracic lint, skint), and 'bread' (money, from bread and honey).

**comparative** - refers to an adverb or adjective which expresses a higher degree of a quality, for example 'greater' is the comparative of 'great'; 'lower' is the comparative of 'low'.

**conjugation** - this refers to [verb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) alteration, or the resulting verb form after alteration, or a category of type of alteration, for reasons of tense, gender, person, etc. The basic word form, such as 'smile', is a [lexeme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22lexeme-definitions-examples); 'smiled' is the past tense conjugation. The term 'past tense' may also be called a conjugation, since it refers to an alteration of a verb.

**conjunction** - a [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) which connects two words or phrases together, for example, 'if', 'but', 'and', etc.

**consonant** - a speech sound (and letter signifying one of these) made from obstructing airflow during the voicing of words. Words essentially comprise sounds which are consonants and [vowels](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vowel-definitions), and the representation of words in writing contain letters which are consonants and vowels. See [places of articulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22places-of-articulation) to see how consonant sounds are made.

**contraction** - in linguistics, contraction is a shortening of a word, and also refers to the shortened word itself. This is a very significant aspect of language development. Contraction is a form of abbreviation towards which language naturally shifts all the time. The word [goodbye](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22goodbye-good-bye-origins) is a contraction of 'God be with you'. The word ['pram'](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pram-origins) (a baby carriage) is a contraction of the original word 'perambulator'. the word ['bedlam'](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22bedlam-word-origins) is a contraction of the original word Bethlehem (mental hospital). Combined abbreviated word forms such as don't, can't, should've, you're, I'm, and ain't, etc., are all contractions. Many words are contractions of older longer words, or of more than one word abbreviated by contraction into a shorter word. Contraction is mostly driven by unconscious human tendency to try to speak ([articulate](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22articulation-definitions)) more easily and efficiently, so that words flow and movement of mouth/tongue is minimized. Language naturally develops in this way. Words shorten, and spellings simplify over time. [Elision](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22elision-definitions-examples) - the omission of a sound or syllable in speech - is a major feature in many contractions, and illustrates how language develops according to popular usage, rather than according to rules offered by grammar education and dictionaries. [Portmanteau words](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22portmanteau/portmateau-word) are also contractions, but of a different sort, not generally the result of elision, instead being usually a deliberate abbreviated word combination.

**contradiction** - a view or statement which opposes another previous view or statement, or a statement or verbalized position which argues against itself, which commonly especially concerning brief statements is also called a ['contradiction in terms'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contradiction-in-terms-examples). From the Latin root word elements contra, against, and dicere, speak.

**contradiction in terms** - a short expression or statement which is self-contradicting, for example, 'a living hell' or 'drank myself sober'. A 'contradiction of terms' is also called an [oxymoron](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22oxymorons-examples-definitions).

**contranym/contronym -** one of two words of the same spelling and opposite meanings, for example the word 'bolt' (which can mean fixed and secure in place, and the opposite meaning: move fast and run away). See [autoantonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22autoantonym-auto-antonym-examples).

**conjunction** - a word which joins two statements or phrases or words together, such as the words: if, but, and, as, that, therefore etc.

**copyright** - the legal right (control and ownership) automatically belonging to the creator of artistic work such as writings, designs, artworks, and music, to publish, sell and exploit the work concerned. Copyright is a very significant concept in the creation of language-based works, such as poetry, books, and other writings. Importantly copyright makes it illegal to copy and exploit other people's work without agreement. Copyright usually exists for several decades, depending on territory and nature of work, and is subject to potentially highly complex law. Copyright may be sold, transferred, or the usage conditions relaxed, upon the wishes of the owner of the work. Contrary to popular view, copyright does not require registration. It exists automatically upon the creation of the work. If you merely scribble a pattern or a few original sentences on a piece of paper, that 'work' automatically is subject to your 'copyright'. Copyright normally includes a date of creation and/or publication and/or update or revision. Many printed works may contain copyright interests of several parties, for example, in the original created work, in the design/layout of the publication, and perhaps separately for pictures and diagrams created by other people. The creator of the work decides whether to transfer copyright to a buyer of the work, which is normally a matter of negotiation depending on the nature of usage, and the relative needs and powers of the buyer and seller. See also [plagiarism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22plagiarism-definitions).

**cruciverbalist** - a crossword puzzle enthusiast/expert.

**declension** - the altered form of the basic ([lexeme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22lexeme-definitions-examples)) form of a noun or adjective or pronoun, for reasons of number, gender, etc. The word girl is a lexeme. The word girls is a declension. There are generally fewer declensions in English than in other languages such as French and German.

**demonym** - also called a gentilic - the word demonym refers to the name for someone who lives in (or more loosely is from, or was born in) a country or city or other named place. Most demonyms are derived very naturally and logically from the place name, for example: American, Australian, Indian, Mexican, British, Scottish, Irish, although some vary a little more, such as Welsh (from Wales), Mancunian (from Manchester UK), Liverpudlian (Liverpool UK), Martian (Mars), and a few demonyms which are quite different words such as Dutch (from Holland/The Netherlands). The word demonym is recent (late 1900s) in this precise context with uncertain attribution, although the term demonymic is apparently first recorded (OED) in 1893 referring to a certain type of people in Athens, from deme, a political division of Attica in ancient Greece, in turn from Greek demos, people.

**determiner** - in language and grammar a determiner is a modifying word which clarifies the nature of a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples) or [noun phrase](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22noun-phrase-definitions-examples) - a determiner tells the listener or reader the status of something, for example, in terms of uniqueness, quantity, ownership, relative position, etc. Examples of determiner words are 'a', 'the', 'very', 'this', 'that', 'my', 'your', 'many', 'few', 'several', etc.

**diacritic** - a sign or mark of some sort which appears with a letter (above, below or through it) to signify a different pronunciation. For example, accent, cedilla, circumflex, umlaut, etc. See [diacritical marks](http://www.businessballs.com/diacriticalmarks.htm). From Greek diakrinein, distinguish, from dia, through, and krinein, to separate.

**dialect** - the language, including sound and pronunciation, of a particular region, area, nationality, social group, or other group of people.

**diathesis** - equates to [voice](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22voice-definitions-examples) in grammar, i.e., whether a [verb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) or verb construction is [active](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22active-definitions-examples) or [passive](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22passive-definitions-examples), for example, 'some nightclubs ban ripped jeans' is active diathesis, whereas, 'ripped jeans are banned by some nightclubs' is passive diathesis. In tactical or sensitive communications the use of passive or active diathesis is often a less provocative way of communicating something which implies fault or blame, for example, 'the photocopier has been broken' (passive voice/diathesis) is less accusatory/confrontational than 'someone has broken the photocopier' (active voice/diathesis). Common examples of this use of passive diathesis/voice are notices such as, 'thieves will be prosecuted' (passive), and 'breakages must be paid for' (passive), which are less confrontational/direct than, 'we will prosecute you if you steal from us' (active), and 'you must pay for anything you break' (active). However, given a different verb and context the active diathesis may be less threatening, for example 'the situation is challenging' (active), seems less onerous than 'we/you are challenged by this situation' (passive). Often the presence/potential presence of the word 'by' indicates that the diathesis/voice is passive.

**dichotomy** - in linguistics, a dichotomy is a division or contrast between two things (ideas, concepts, etc) which are considered to be completely different, especially opposing or competing, for example which may arise in a debate or choice. The [adjective](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22adjectives-definitions-examples) dichotomous refers to something which contains two different or opposing or contrasting concepts, ideas, theories, etc. In some contexts a dichotomy is [synonymous](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22synonym-definitions-examples) with a [contradiction](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contradiction-in-terms-examples) or with an [oxymoron](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22oxymorons-examples-definitions). (From Greek dikho, in two/apart, and [tomy](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tomy-suffix-meaning), which refers to a process.)

**dingbat** - in written or printed language a dingbat is a symbol - most commonly an asterisk - substituted for a letter, typically several dingbats for several letters, to reduce the offensive impact of vulgar words, such as F\*\*K, or S\*\*T. Dingbats may also be used to substitute all letters in a vulgar word, notably for dramatic or amusing effect in cartoon talk bubbles, for example \*\*\*!!, or the probably somewhat ruder ¡\*¿¿\*¿$$?!!\*\*\*!!.

**diphthong** - a vocal sound of one syllable with two different qualities, one merging into the next, often very subtly indeed, produced by the combination of two vowels, whether the vowels are together (for example, as in road and rain), apart (as in game and side), or joined as a [ligature](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ligature) (as in the traditional spelling of encyclopædia). Note that the two different vowel sound qualities are not easily discernible and many speakers of the language concerned will believe such sounds to be a single pure vowel sound as in a [monophthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22monophthong). A diphthong typically entails a very slight glide or slide a slightly different sound within the same syllable. See also [triphthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22triphthong-examples-definitions), which refers to there being three different sound qualities in a single vowel-sound syllable. [Monophthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22monophthong) refers to a single pure vowel syllable sound. The word diphthong derives from Greek di, twice, and phthongos, voice/sound.

**diphthongization/monophthongization** - this is a significant feature of language evolution: The evolution of speech and [dialect](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dialect-definitions-meanings) (increasingly across cultures) influences what we regard as 'correct' or 'dictionary' language and words themselves, and involves pronunciation transitions from [monophthongs](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22monophthong) to [diphthongs](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diphthong-definition-examples) (and vice-versa) as substantial factors. These transitions are called respectively diphthongization (pronunciation introduces an additional vowel sound such as a slide or drawl, changing a single sound to a double sound) and monophthongization (a double sound is simplified to a single quicker simpler sound). These features and changes in language are significant in producing the differences in accents when we compare, for example, the dialects of American-English speakers (from various parts of the US) with each other and with UK-English speakers (again in various parts of the UK) and with each other, and with other English speakers. These same features of diphthongization and monophthongization have also been significant in the development of the English language throughout history. Similar effects exist in other languages.

**dis-** - a very common [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) denoting negativity, reversal/inversion, or a disadvantage.

**discourse** - a technical word for a communication of some sort, written or spoken, and often comprising a series of communications.

**ditto** - ditto means 'the same as' (the thing that precedes it), from Latin dictus, said. Ditto is probably most commonly shown as the ditto mark ("), in columns or rows or lists of data, where it signifies 'same as the above'. Where the repetition is an extended row of data or words, several symbols may be linked by long hyphens, or a single symbol may be flanked by two very long hyphens reaching each end of the repeated data, so avoiding the need for a ditto symbol beneath each item/word.

**dogberryism** - a faintly popular alternative term for a [malapropism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22malapropism), whereby a similar-sounding word is incorrectly and amusingly substituted in speech, the term being derived from the constable Dogberry character in Shakespeare's As You Like It.

**double-entendre** - a double-meaning or pun, where one of the meanings usually is amusing in a suggestive sexual or indecent way - from old French, double understanding, now 'double entente').

**double-meaning** - a pun, where a word, phrase or statement can be interpreted to mean two different things, typically where the less obvious meaning is funny, or suggestively indecent or rude in an amusing way.

**double-negative** - this is usually an incorrect grammatical use of two negative words or constructions within a single statement so that the technical result is an expression of the positive, or opposite of what the speaker/writer intends. Usage is commonly associated with regional vernacular inarticulate adults and children, although more complex yet still awkward forms of the double-negative can be found in supposedly expert communications. A common example in everyday speech is, "I don't know nothing.." (which equates to 'I know something'), or "They never did nothing about it.." Separately the double negative is often used simply, or potentially very cleverly, within understatement, or litotes, as a way to emphasize something, and/or to make a humorous or sarcastic comment - for example "That's not bad..." to mean very good. See [litotes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22litotes).

**dysphasia** - a brain disorder due to accident or illness inhibiting speech and/or comprehension of speech.

**dysphemism** - a negative, derogatory, or insulting term, used instead of a neutral (and more usual) one; the opposite of a [euphemism](http://www.businessballs.com/business-dictionary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Euphemism).

**egg corn** - a combination of a loose [pun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pun-definitions-examples) and a (usually intentional) [malapropism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22malapropism). An egg corn may be written or spoken, designed or notable mainly for humorous effect, in which a word or words are substituted within a term or expression or phrase to produce a different and (typically) related meaning. For example the adaption of 'Alzheimer's disease' to 'old-timer's disease'. The term 'egg corn' is attributed to linguistics professor Geoffrey Pullum, 2003, who apparently drew on an example of the effect in a linguistics blog referring to a woman in the habit of using the term 'egg corn' instead of the word acorn. Other examples of egg corns may be similarly daft, although some are more sophisticated. Often a feature of egg corns is [irony](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22irony-ironic-definitions-examples). Wikipedia (2013) offers the examples: 'ex-patriot' instead of 'expatriate'; 'mating name' instead of 'maiden name'; 'on the spurt of the moment' instead of 'on the spur of the moment'; 'preying mantis' instead of 'praying mantis'. Business names offer fertile opportunities for egg corns, for (real) example a clothing alterations shop called 'Sew What' ('So What'); a flame grill fast food restaurant called 'Hindenburger' (a darkly ironic reference to the Hindenburg German airship inferno disaster of 1937); a gardener called 'The Lawn Ranger' ('The Lone Ranger'); a sandwich bar called 'Lettuce Eat' ('let us eat'); A Chinese restaurant called Wok and Roll (Rock'n'roll'); an alleyway bookshop called 'Book Passage' ('back passage' - also slang for anus, although this has nothing to do with books per se - it's just an amusing notion); a tennis centre called 'The Merchant of Tennis' ('The Merchant of Venice' - no relevance to tennis or sport at all, just funny); a flower shop called 'Florist Gump' ('Forrest Gump' - no relevance to flowers, merely a daft punning egg corn); a fish and chip shop called 'The Codfather' ('The Godfather', famous movie series, again simply a daft funny pun); a building contractor called 'William the Concretor' ('William the Conqueror'); a hairdressers called 'Cubic Hair' ('Pubic Hair', and also alluding to the cubist art movement); a kebab restaurant called 'Pita Pan' ('Peter Pan' and also alluding to a cooking pan); a furniture store called 'Sofa So Good' ('so far so good'); a chip shop called 'Lord of the Fries' ('Lord of the Flies', William Golding's best-selling 1954 novel, and absolutely no connection with fish and chips). The [slang money term](http://www.businessballs.com/moneyslanghistory.htm) 'sick squid' ('six quid') is an egg corn, from which the term 'squid' meaning quid (£ pound) derived.

**elision** - the omission of a sound or syllable in the speaking of words, such as don't, won't, isn't, I'm, you're, etc. The usual pronunciation of the word 'wednesday' as 'wensdy' is elision. The use of glottal stop is also often elision too, as in the cockney/[estuary English](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22estuary-english-definitions) pronunciation of 'a pint and a half' as 'a pi'n'arf'. Elision is a common feature of [contractions](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contraction-defintions-examples)(shortened words).

**ellipsis** - missing word or words in speech or text, for example 'Keep Off Grass', (here 'the' is omitted for reasons of space/impact). Ellipsis may be used for various reasons, for example: omitted irrelevant sections of a quoted passage, usually indicated by three dots, to show just the meaningful sections, for example "...positive economic factors... resulting in substantial growth..."; or in speech/text due to casual or lazy or abbreviated language, for example 'Love you' where the 'I' is obvious/implied, or "Parking at own risk" instead of the full grammatically correct "Parking is at customers' own risk". Another common reason for ellipsis is where surrounding context enables words to be omitted that might otherwise seem unnecessary/repetitious, such as in listing items/activities, for example in the descriptive passage: "He packed shoes, socks, shirts, ties. A blazer. Cufflinks. Some silk handkerchiefs. And cologne." Here the ellipsis creates the dramatic effect of packing items into a case thoughtfully in different actions, rather than (the full arguably more grammatically correct, but clumsier and less dramatic/prosaic, continuous flowing version): "He packed shoes, socks, shirts, and ties. He also bought a blazer, cufflinks, some silk handkerchiefs, and cologne." The word ellipsis is from Ancient Greek elleipein, meaning 'leave out'.

**emphasis** - loosely equating to [stress](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22stress-in-language) in pronunciation of words and syllables, and separately applying more broadly to the different intonation and volume given by speakers to certain words or phrases in a spoken passage so as to add impact, attract attention, prioritize, etc. Emphasis is commonly signified in printed communications by emboldening or italicizing or highlighting the text concerned. Dictionaries and other language/pronunciation guides usually indicate which syllables in words are to be emphasized or stressed by inserting a single apostrophe before the syllable concerned.

**epistrophe** - repetition of a word or word-series at the end of successive clauses or sentences, used for emphasis and dramatic effect, especially in speeches and prose, for example as used by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, "... this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.." The effect is also called epiphora. The counterpart of [anaphora](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22anaphora-definition), which uses repetition at the beginning of sentences/clauses.

**epitaph** - a phrase or other series of words which is written to commemorate or otherwise be remembered and associated with someone who has died, for example as commonly appears on a tombstone. The comedian Spike Milligan wrote his own famously amusing epitaph: 'I told you I was ill.'

**epithet** - an [adjective](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22adjectives-definitions-examples) or [phrase](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phrase) which is generally considered, or would be recognized, as characterizing a person or type or other thing, by using a word or a very few words which convey the essence or a chief aspect of the thing concerned. An epithet seeks to describe somebody or a group or something in an obviously symbolic and very condensed way. For example little noisy dogs are commonly referred to by the epithet 'yappy'. The epithet 'tried and trusted' is commonly used to refer to methods and processes which are long-established and successful. The epithet 'keen' is often used to refer to a person who is particularly enthused, determined and focused, and typically strongly motivated towards a particular action or outcome. The epithet 'green and pleasant land' is often used to refer to England. From Greek epi, upon, and tithenai, to place.

**eponym** - a name for something which derives from a person's name, or from the name of something else, for example biro (after Laszlo Biro, inventor of the ballpoint pen), atlas (after the Greek mythological titan Atlas, who held the world on his shoulders), Mach (the measurement unit and earthly speed of sound, after Ernst Mach). The descriptive term for an eponym is [eponymous](http://www.businessballs.com/business-dictionary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Eponym-eponymous). An eponymous name is therefore one which is named after someone/something. The term derives from Greek epo, meaning 'upon'.

**estuary english** - the dialect and speech style associated with people from London and surrounding areas, especially Essex and Kent conurbations close to the Thames river estuary, hence the name. This is a relatively recent term and an attempt by certain media and commentators to attach a name to the accent of the Greater London area, as distinct from [cockney](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cockney).

**etymology** - the technical study/field of word origins, and how words change over time, or specifically the history of a word, originally from Greek etumos, true.

**etymon** - a word or [morphene](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22morphene-definitions) from which a later word is derived.

**euphony/euphonic** - this refers to the pleasant nature of speech and vocal sounds and is a highly significant aspect in the development of language. This is because language evolves according to its quality as well as its meaning. Words and sounds that are pleasing to the ear and to our unconscious responses tend to be preferred and used more than language whose sounds (and efforts in producing the sounds) displease the speaker and listener (called [cacophonous](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cacophony-cacophonous)). Also euphonic sounds flow more smoothly and so enable easier more satisfying communications. The expression 'easy on the ear' actually has very deep significance. Languages evolves like living things; the best and fittest word sounds thrive and endure and continue to adapt positively. The unfit and awkward sounds struggle for long-term acceptance and popularity. Clear examples of the positive influence of euphony are found in the popularity of [reduplicative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22reduplication-definition-examples) words, and in [alliterative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22alliteration-meaning) phrases, and in poetry, which are easy and pleasing - euphonic - to say and hear. Avoid confusing euphony and cacophony with the meaning of words. Euphony and cacophony refer to sound and ease of utterance, not to meaning. Words which carry extremely ugly or offensive meaning are often amazingly euphonic. In fact most offensive words are very euphonic indeed - they are easy to say and phonically are pleasing on the ear (although it is vital to ignore meaning when considering this assertion). This is a major reason that offensive words thrive and remain so popular - people love to say them. Contrast this with 'difficult' words such as long chemical names, which have been constructed technically by scientists and engineers, rather than having evolved over hundreds of years. Such words are rarely euphonic - they are awkward and unnatural, and so they remain obscure. This is why we will always prefer to say 'bleach', rather than 'sodium hypochlorite'. It's not a matter of word-size - it's that 'sodium hypochlorite' is cacophonous, whereas 'bleach' is sublimely euphonic. In fact 'sodium' is actually very euphonic (it's an old word), but 'hypochlorite' is ugly sounding and very awkward to say, so it will therefore 'never catch on'. Conversely when we say that words 'trip off the tongue' this is a [metaphorical](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) expression and instinctive appreciation of euphony, and also of euphony's significance in affecting the way we speak and the way in which languages develop.

**exonym** - a placename which foreigners use and which differs from the local or national name. from Greek exo, meaning outside.

**expression** - an expression in language equates loosely and generally to a [cliche](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cliche-clich%EF%BF%BD-definitions-examples), or separately the term expression/express refers to a communication of some sort, for example 'an expression of horror', or 'John expressed his surprise'.

**euphemism** - a positive/optimistic/mild word or phrase that is substituted for a strong/negative/offensive/blunt word or phrase, typically to avoid upset or embarrassment (either for communicator and/or audience), or used cynically to mislead others, often to avoid criticism. For example: 'collateral damage' instead of 'civilian casualties/deaths' in justifying military action; or 'the birds and the bees' instead of 'sex' in sex education; or 'downsizing' instead of 'redundancies' in corporate announcements; or 'negative growth' instead of 'losses' or 'contraction' in financial performance commentary. Death and dying are usually expressed in a euphemism, for example, 'passing away'. Heaven is arguably a euphemism for what happens after death. Euphemisms are very common in referring to sexual matters and bodily functions, due to embarrassment, real or perceived. Hence terms such as 'making love', and words like poo, wee, willy, bum, etc. Some euphemisms are appropriate, others are or disingenuous. Where there is honest intention to avoid causing offence or upset in sensitive human situations, euphemisms are usually appropriate. Where a politician or business person uses euphemistic language to avoid responsibility, blame, etc., then euphemisms are cynical and dishonest. The inverse or opposite of a euphemism is a [dysphemism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dysphemism).

**figurative** - in language the term figurative refers to the [non-literal](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22literal-literally-definitions) use of words, equating to the symbolic or [metaphorical](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples)representation of concepts, thoughts, things, ideas, feelings, etc. The term figurative is very broad and can potentially mean any use of descriptive language which is not factual. Figurative types of description include [similes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples), metaphors, exaggeration, or any other descriptive device which distorts the strict technical meaning of the words used.

**figure of speech** - a figure of speech is a symbolic [expression](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22expression-definitions); 'figure of speech' is a very broad term for a word or series of words used in writing or speech in a [non-literal](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22literal-literally-definitions) sense (i.e., symbolically), which may be a [cliche](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cliche-clich%EF%BF%BD-definitions-examples) or [metaphor](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) or [simile](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples), or another expression which represents in a symbolic way a concept or feeling or idea or some other communication. A figure of speech may be a popular and widely used expression, or one that a person conceives for a single use. There are very many thousands of figures of speech in language, many of which we imagine wrongly to be perfectly normal literal expressions, such is the habitual way that many of them are used.

**font** - nowadays the word font has a broader meaning than its original or traditional meaning: font used to refer to a specific size and style of a [typeface](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22typeface) (typeface being a font family, such as Times or Helvetica, including all sizes and variants such as bold and italic, etc). In modern times font tends more to refer to an entire font family or typeface (such as Times or Helvetica). The word font is derived from French fonte and fodre, to melt, referring to the making of lead type used in traditional printing.

**former** - this is a quite an old technical formal writing or speaking technique: former here refers to the earliest of a number of (usually two) items mentioned in a preceding passage of text/speech. Its sister word is latter, which refers to the last (usually second) item mentioned in a preceding passage of text. An example in use is, '...There was a problem involving the keys and the house, when the former were locked inside the latter...' The usage typically aims to avoid unnecessary or clumsy repetition, although with declining use, and correspondingly increasing numbers of people who have not the faintest idea what former and latter mean in this context, the merits of the methodology are debatable. See [latter](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22latter-meanings-examples).

**generic** - the word generic refers to a class or category or group of things - it is a flexible and relative concept. Generic might otherwise mean 'general' or 'broadly applicable' (in relation to something which belongs to a class or set, which basically everything does in one way), or describe 'similar items/members'. Its usage normally seeks to differentiate a broad sense from a specific sense. Generic is the opposite of specific or unique or individual. More technically generic refers to classes of things in formal [taxonomy](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22taxonomy-definitions-examples) or classifications. The word derives ultimately from Latin genus, meaning stock or race.

**genericized trademark/generic trademark** - a word which was (and may still be) a brand name that is used in a general or [generic](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22generic-definition-examples) sense for the item or substance concerned, irrespective of the brand or manufacturer, for example Aspirin, Velcro, Hoover, Sellotape, Durex, Li-lo, Bakelite, Zippo, Coke, etc. Many genericized trademark names have entered language so that people do not appreciate that the word is/was a registered and protected brandname. There are surprisingly very many such names. Corporations and other owners of genericized trademark names typically resist or object to the effect, because legally the 'intellectual property' is undermined, and its value and security as an asset is lessened (which enables competitors to sell similar products). There is however a powerful contra-effect by which owners of genericized trademarks potentially command a hugely serious and popular reputation, which can be used to leverage lots of other benefits and opportunities if managed creatively and positively. It is, as the saying goes, 'a nice problem to have'. See a long list of genericized trademarks.

**gerund** - a [verb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) used in the form of a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples), typically by using the 'ing' suffix, for example 'when the going gets tough' (going being the noun) or 'it's the screaming and wailing that upsets people' (both screaming and wailing here being gerunds). Originally from Latin gerundum, which is the gerund of the Latin verb gerere, to do.

**gerundive** - a [verb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22verbs-definitions-examples) used in the form of an adjective, with the meaning or sense of '(the verb) is to be done'. Gerundive constructions do not arise in English as gerunds do, but they appear in words that have entered English from Latin, often ending in 'um' for example 'quod erat demonstrandum' ('which was to be demonstrated' - abbreviated to QED, used after proving something). Interestingly the name Amanda is a (female) gerundive, meaning '(she) is to be loved'. The words referendum, agenda, and propaganda are all from Latin gerundive words, which convert a verb into an adjective with the meaning of necessity to fulfil the verb.

**glottal stop** - a consonant sound produced by blocking exhaled airflow (when voicing vowel sounds) by sudden closure of the vocal tract, specifically the folds at the glottis (the opening of the vocal chords), and which may be followed by an immediate reopening of the airflow to enable the word to continue. Glottal stops may therefore happen at the ends of words or during words, for example in cockney and ['Estuary English'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22estuary-english-definitions) (a dialect of Greater London and communities close to this) where in English they typically replace a formal letter sound, commonly a 't', which is then referred to as a 'dropped' letter. The glottal stop, while extremely common in speech, is not formally included in the English alphabet, but is included in certain foreign languages, notably in Arabic nations.

**glyph** - a single smallest unit (symbol) of meaning in [typographics](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22typographics-typography) (writing/printing symbols), i.e., a symbol whose presence or absence alters the meaning of a word or longer communication. All letters are glyphs. [Diacritical marks](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diacritics) are generally regarded as glyphs. Increasingly computer symbols are regarded as glyphs. A dot above an 'i' or 'j' has traditionally not been considered a glyph in English, although is a glyph in other languages where a dot alone has an independent meaning.

**-graph** - a common [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings) which refers to a [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) or visual symbol, or denotes something that is written or drawn or a visual representation, for example as in the words autograph, photograph, etc. From Greek graphos, meaning written, writing.

**grapheme** - the smallest semantic (meaning) unit of written language, equating loosely to a [phoneme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phoneme-meanings-definitions) of speech. Graphemes include alphabet letters, typographic ligatures, Chinese characters, numerical digits, punctuation marks, and other individual symbols of writing systems.

**hash** - also called the 'number sign' (#), and in US/Canada and nations using US [vernacular](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vernacular-meanings-definitions) the 'pound sign', since it refers alternatively to the UK £ (sterling currency) symbol. The hash/pound symbol generally appears bottom right on telephone keypads and is significant in confirming many telecommunications and functions. The hash symbol has also become significant in computerized and internet functionality and data organization, as notably in the ['hashtag'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hashtag).

**hashtag** - a hashtag is the use of the hash (#) symbol as a prefix for an identifying name relating to content or data of some class or commonality that may be sorted or grouped or analyzed, most famously in modern times on social media websites such as Twitter. In fact the use of the hash symbol for computerized sorting and analysis purposes first began in Internet Relay Chat Systems, first developed in the late 1980s. The hashtag is a major example of the increasing simplification, streamlining, coding and internationalization of language, and especially to this end, of the integration of numbers and symbols within words and letters and electronic communications to increase speeds of communicating and accessibility, and to reduce the quantity of characters required to convey a given meaning, and also to organize and distribute communications-related data.

**hendiadys** - a sort of tautology which for dramatic effect or emphasis expresses two aspects or points separately rather than by (more obviously and efficiently) combining them, for example: "The rain and wet fell incessantly..."

**holonym** - a whole thing in relation to a part of the whole, for example the word 'car' is a holonym in relation to 'wheel' or to 'engine'. From Greek holon, whole, and onuma, name.

**heteronym** - heteronym refers to each of two (or more) words which have the same spelling but quite different meanings, for example key (to a door or lock) and key (in music). Where the sound is different such words are also called [heterophones](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22heterophone-definitions-examples). Where the sound is the same such words are also called [homonyms](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22homonym-definitions-examples). Additionally and differently heteronym refers to single words which are quite different but mean the same, either due to geographical differences, for example fender and bumper (the US/UK-English words for protective construction front/rear of motor cars, etc), or due to different [etymology](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22etymology-definitions), for example settee and sofa, or dog and hound. From Greek, heteros, other, and the suffix '[onym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22-onym-meanings-origins)', which refers to a type of name.

**heterograph** - a less common term than and equating to a [heteronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22heteronym-definitions-examples), i.e., one of two or more words with the same spelling, but different meaning and different origin, and may be pronounced the same or differently.

**heterophone** - this is a [heteronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22heteronym-definitions-examples) that is pronounced differently to its related words, (i.e., the other word[s] which cause each to be a heteronym). From Greek heteros, other, and phone, sound or voice. Examples of heterophones include entrance (entry, and put someone in a trance), row (row a boat, and row meaning argue), wind (a wind that blows, and wind up a clock).

**heteronym** - one of two or more words with the same spelling, but different meaning and different origin, and may be pronounced the same or differently. Each word looks the same as the other but has quite a different meaning. A heteronym is a kind of homonym, and equates to a heterograph. From Greek hetero, other. For example sewer (stitcher/water-waste pipework), bow (made with ribbon/bend from the hips) row (argument/propel a boat).

**homo-** - a common [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) meaning 'same', from Greek homos, same.

**homonym** - homonym refers to each of two (or more) words with the same pronunciation or spelling, but different meanings and [etymological](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22etymology-definitions) origins, for example the word 'mean' (unkind or average or intend, for which each 'mean' is quite differently derived), or the words flower and flour. A homonym involving the same spelling is also called a [heteronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22heteronym-definitions-examples). A homonym which involves different spelling is also called a [homophone](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22homophone-definitions-examples). [Homo](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22homo-prefix-meaning) is a [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) from the Greek homos meaning same.

**homograph** - one of two or more words which have the same spelling but different meanings, and usually different origins too.

**homophone** - a word which sounds like another but has different meaning and spelling, for example flour and flower.

### heteronyms, heterophones, heterographs, homonyms, homophones, homographs - explanatory matrix

Note that the definitions of these terms contain many overlaps and common features. Linguistics experts may disagree over precise certain finely detailed differences.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **same --->** | **meaning** | **sound** | **spelling** | **origin** | **examples** |
| **heteronym** | different | d or s | same | different | key (music)/key (lock) |
| **heterophone** | different | different | same | different | entrance (entry)/entrance (hypnotise) |
| **heterograph** | different | d or s | same | different | key (music)/key (lock) |
| **homonym** | different | same (or) | (or) same | different | mean (intend)/mean (unkind)/mean (average) - flower/flour |
| **homophone** | different | same | different | different | weigh/way - write/right - flower/flour |
| **homograph** | different | d or s | same | d or s | entrance (entry)/entrance (hypnotise) |

(N.B. It can be helpful to a small degree in understanding the confusing relative meanings and overlaps of these terms, to remember that 'phone' refers to sound, 'nym' refers to word/name, and 'graph' refers to spelling - I say 'to a small degree' because even given this knowledge the confusion remains challenging to resolve completely, so some caution is recommended in using any of these terms in an absolutely firm sense.)

**hypo-/hyper-**- these two common [prefixes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) mean respectively (loosely) 'over/above' and 'under/below', from their Greek origins, huper (over) and hupo (under). Remembering these two simplex prefixes will help the understanding of hundreds of different terms.

**hyperbole** - exaggeration or excessive description, used for dramatic effect, or arising from emotional reactions, rather than for accuracy or scientific reasons. For example, 'I am so hungry I could eat a horse...' or 'I've told you a million times...' From Greek huper, over, and ballein, thrown.

**hypernym/hyperonym**- interestingly we use these words every day, and understand their meaning and positioning, but probably don't realize what they are called technically, i.e., a hypernym is a category or group name within which different types or sorts exist, or a general term within which more specific different type terms exist. For example, 'bird' is a hypernym (group name) in relation to 'sparrow', 'eagle', and 'pelican' (which are [hyponyms](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hyponym-definitions-examples) of the 'bird' group or hypernym). In turn 'animal' is a hypernym for 'bird' which is a hyponym of 'animal. In turn 'creature' is a hypernym of 'animal'. All hyponyms may accurately be called also the name of their hypernym, but not vice-versa, for example every hammer (hyponym) is a tool (hypernym), but not every tool is a hammer. Hypernym is from Greek huper, over, beyond. A hypernym is also called a superordinate or generic term.

**hyponym** - this is a sister term (or more precisely a daughter term) to hypernym and refers to something which is in a category of some sort, for example 'sparrow', 'eagle', and 'pelican' are all hyponyms in a category named 'bird' ('bird' is the [hypernym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hypernym-hyperonym-definitions-examples) in relation to the stated hyponyms). A hypernym word may always correctly be referred to as the hypernym word (for example 'golf' is a 'game', as is every other hyponym of 'game') - but the same does not apply in reverse, (i.e., a 'game' is not always 'golf'). Every word in the language is a hyponym, because every word refers to something which is part of a group of some sort. Hyponym is from Greek hupo, under, which is a good way to remember that hyponyms are 'under' a hypernym. A hyponym is also called a subordinate term.

**-i** - 'i' is an increasingly commonly seen [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) denoting 'internet' and suggestive of connectivity and functionality associated with internet technologies. I am open to suggestions of when the i prefix was very first used in this way. The Apple corporation could claim the first globally dominant usage. Apple has many trademarks covering the use of the i prefix (notably iPhone, iTunes, iPad, iPod). According to reports, the Apple TV was to be called the iTV until UK broadcaster ITV (Independent Television) objected/threatened legal action.

**icon** - a symbol representing something - icons are increasingly becoming highly significant elements of modern communications, to the extent that we can imagine alphabets of the future comprising many icons, just as they will have to accommodate numbers and other symbols, alongside traditional letters. See [icon](http://www.businessballs.com/business-dictionary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22icon-meanings) in the business dictionary.

**idiom** - a word, or more usually words, which through common use have developed a recognizable [figurative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22figurative-meaning-definitions) meaning, so as to refer to or describe something in symbolic [non-literal](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22literal-literally-definitions) terms. Idioms may be widely recognized, or understood just by a small group, for example by virtue of locality or common interest. Languages are full of idioms; many [cliches](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cliche-clich%EF%BF%BD-definitions-examples) are idioms, as are many [similes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples) and [metaphors](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) too. An idiom is generally an expression which is popularly used by a group of people, as distinct from a figurative expression created by an author or other writer for a single use within the created work, which does not come into more common use. Idioms commonly feature in the [dialect](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dialect-definitions-meanings) of groups defined by geography or culture. The word idiom derives from Greek idios, 'own' or 'private'.

**i.e.** - a commonly used abbreviation of the Latin term 'id est', meaning 'that is', for example when offering a clarification or explanation of, or a listing related to, the directly preceding reference or point. In most usage the full meaning of 'i.e.' is effectively 'that is to say..', for example: 'His travels took him to the capital cities of England, France and Portugal, i.e., London, Paris and Lisbon..' Or: 'Nowadays people use to many detergents and other chemicals to clean things, when much of the time the only cleaning product required is the "universal solvent", i.e., water'.

**inflection** - also spelled inflexion - in linguistics inflection refers to tonal or pitch alteration or [modulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22modulation-definitions) of the human voice, or in grammar to the alteration of a basic word ([lexeme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22lexeme-definitions-examples)) - its ending or beginning or spelling - to change tense, gender, mood, person, [voice](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22voice-definitions-examples) (whether gramatically active or passive, i.e., [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples)), number, gender and case. The inflection of verbs is called [conjugation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22conjugation-definitions-examples), and the inflection of nouns/adjectives/pronouns is called [declension](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22declension-definitions-examples).

**intellectual property** - often abbreviated to IP, 'intellectual property' is a widely used legal term referring to created works such as writings, artworks, brandnames, designs, music, inventions, etc., which may be recorded and officially registered in some way, and which may not be copied or exploited without approval or licence or other permission from the '[rights-holder](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22rights-holder-definitions)'. Implicitly, intellectual property commonly has a commercial value, which while relatively 'intangible' may (in the case of popular brands and mass-produced products) be considerable and stated in official financial accounts. Normally intellectual property would be registered in some way to improve protections and awareness of existence/ownership, aside from the natural [copyright](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22copyright-definitions-examples) existing in any original created work. Examples of registered intellectual property are: patented inventions, designs, brandnames and trademarks, books, poetry, photographs, sculptures, processes and systems, software, written and recorded music. Different registration bodies exist for different types of work and different geographical territories.

**International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** - a major and widely used phonetic alphabetic system, devised by the International Phonetic Association as a way to represent vocal language sounds. The alphabet's most obvious purpose is to show how words and letters are pronounced. The IPA is used by technical and professional linguists and lexicographers, and others involved in the study and teaching of spoken language. Its representations of words appear alongside most entries in many dictionaries of languages which use the Latin alphabet. The IPA is an extremely vast system, comprising (at revision in 2005) 107 letters ([consonants](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22consonants-definitions-examples) and [vowels](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vowel-definitions)), over 50 [diacritics](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diacritics) and other signs indicating length, [tone](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tone-definitions), stress, and intonation of word/letter sounds. Given that the diacritics and the other modifying signs may be used in various combinations with the letters this produces potential for many thousands of different sounds. [Places of articulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22places-of-articulation) explains where in the mouth and vocal tract these sounds are produced. The image right is linked to a much clearer [PDF of the International Phonetic Language (2005)](http://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/international-phonetic-alphabet-2005.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). The png image and PDF chart are published here according to the following reproduction permission:



(IPA Chart, http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/ipachart.html, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 Unported License. Copyright © 2005 International Phonetic Association.)

**irony/ironic** - in language irony refers to the use of words which intentionally contain a meaning or interpretation which is quite different, or opposite, to the literal or apparent meaning of the words or statements themselves. Irony is a difficult concept for some people to appreciate, partly because it entails quite a deep understanding of context and attitude of the writer/speaker. Where irony is interpreted 'at face value', or according to the initial apparent obvious meaning, the reader/listener derives a false impression of meaning, which may wrongly suggest that the writer/speaker and his/her communication is insulting or foolish. Irony is similar to [sarcasm](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sarcasm-sarcastic-definition-examples), although covers a much wider range of linguistic effects, which may act on a deeper and more extensive level. For example the entire nature of a character, or plotline, or situation in a story may be ironic, whereas the concept of sarcasm is essentially limited to the [tone](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tone-definitions) of communications. Also, irony may be used for various effects such as comedy, dramatization, pathos, etc., whereas sarcasm tends to be used for quick humour, negative observations, insults, denegration, and angry comment.

**Janus word** - an [auto-antonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22autoantonym-auto-antonym-examples) - i.e., one of two words with the same spelling but opposite meanings, such as fast (firmly fixed and moving quickly). So called because the Janus, Roman god of beginnings, transitions, gates, passages, etc., is traditionally depicted with two faces, representing looking both to the future and past at the same time. Janus, incidentally, is also the derivation of January, in the sense of a beginning or doorway to the new year.

**juncture** - in linguistics a juncture is the manner in which two consecutive syllables or words are connected (mainly audibly), so as to differentiate the sounds of the words and thereby enable the entire meaning of the construction. A juncture between syllables and words effectively avoids everything merging into a continuous stream of meaningless sounds. The movement of juncture in words and phrases sometimes produces alternative (amusing, clever, etc) meanings, which effect is called an [oronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22oronym-definitions).

**juxtapose/juxtaposition** - to juxtapose (two ideas, concepts, points, etc) means to put or express two different or contrasting things together for emphatic or dramatic effect. A juxtaposition is the result or act of doing this. For example, (the image or description of) a homeless person begging on the street outside Buckingham Palace would be a juxtaposition. The expression 'take it or leave it' is a very simple juxtaposition. A juxtaposition commonly exaggerates or produces a competing effect, where in reality the two 'competing' items may not actually conflict with each other, or be a stark 'one or the other' choice. A juxtaposition may be used for entertaining and uplifting purposes, as in poetry, drama, movies, etc., or for more negative cynical manipulative purposes, as in politics and marketing.

**Latin** - the language of ancient Rome and widely used still as a language of scholarship, astronomy, administration, law, etc. Latin is one of the fundamental root languages of European language development, specifically of the many 'Romance' languages, notably including Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and Romanian. Latin, chiefly via French, had a significant influence in the development of the English language. The conventional English alphabet (along with those of the Romance languages) is known as the Latinate alphabet, because its origins are in ancient Latin. Many Latin terms survive in day-to-day English language, especially related to business, technical definitions, law, science, etc.

**latter** - the last item in a list or the second of two points. See [former](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22former-meanings-examples).

**leet** - leet, also known as eleet or leetspeak, is an alternative alphabet for the English language that is used primarily on the Internet. It uses various combinations of [ASCII](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ASCII-definition-meaning) characters to replace Latinate (standard English writing) letters. The leet word for leet is I337. Here is an extensive example of [leet-style language](http://www.businessballs.com/scrambledwords.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22letters-numbers-language).

**lexeme** - the basic form of a word, without alteration for verb tense or other [inflection](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22inflection-definitions). Most words in dictionaries tend to be lexemes. Examples of lexeme forms are run, smile, give, boy, child, blond; whereas inflections of these lexemes include for example: runs/ran/running/runner, smiles/smiled/smiling/smiley, gave/giver/given, boys/boyish, children/childish, blonde/blondes/blonder.

**ligature** - in typographics and writing a ligature is an unusually joined form of two letters or other typographical characters, for example the [ampersand](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ampersand). 'Unusually' here refers to a joint which is not typical in handwriting. Typographical folk do not universally agree which jointed forms qualify technically as ligatures, for example the forms æ and œ, which are regarded now by some as as single vowels/symbols in their own right, rather than jointed as they historically have been. Such a disqualification for these and similar double-letter forms would incidentally also render the term [diphthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diphthong-definition-examples) inappropriate, given the definition of that term.

**literal/literally** - originally and technically literal/literally refers to the use of language so that it (the expression or statement, etc) means exactly what the words state, i.e., there is no exaggeration or [metaphor](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples) or symbolization in the language, and therefore the words should be taken as a clear and truthful expression of fact. In informal and recent use however (late 1900s onwards), the term 'literally' is used widely (and arguably very incorrectly) to express precisely the opposite, i.e., that the [figure of speech](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22figure-of-speech-definitions-examples) concerned is [figurative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22figurative-meaning-definitions) or symbolic or (commonly) highly exaggerated and far different from the actual truth. For example: 'I told him literally millions of times ...' or 'He was so angry that smoke was literally coming out of his ears...' This is an example of 'incorrect' usage becoming 'correct' by virtue of popular usage. In this respect the term is potentially highly confusing, since the term 'literally' may mean in common use either that something is completely factual and true, or instead that something is highly exaggerated or distorted. The listener/reader/audience must decide. Usually the statement itself, context, situation and speaker/writer collectively indicate whether the term 'literally' is used in its original technical sense (i.e., factual/actual) or its later wide informal sense (i.e., symbolic/metaphorical/exaggerated). Statements such as: 'I was literally sweating buckets,' and 'I was literally climbing the walls in agony,' are obviously metaphors and so are not technically 'literal' and factual, whereas the statements: 'Our flight was delayed for literally a whole day,' and 'I literally hung my head in shame,' could quite conceivably be technically 'literal' and factual. The term 'literally' is perhaps prone to confusion given the similar words 'literature' and 'literary', whose meaning quite correctly encompasses symbolic and figurative writing (in books, poetry, plays, etc). Whatever, the original technical meaning derives from the Latin equivalent 'litteralis', in turn from litera, meaning 'letter of the alphabet'.

**litotes** - the use of understatement to give emphasis, typically to the opposite meaning (i.e., it's actually an ironic subtle way to make an overstatement or exaggeration), and often in a humorous way, especially but not necessarily also the use of the ['double-negative'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22double-negative-examples) - for example "that's not bad.." in referring to something that is considered very good, or "not half.." to emphasise an expression of 'wholly' or 'fully' or 'very'. Many examples of litotes have entered common speech so that we don't think about them as understatement. For example: "I won't be sorry.." (meaning I will be glad); "Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.." (meaning dull-witted); "Not the fastest.." (meaning very slow or the slowest); "I was just a little hungry.." (meaning I was starving); or "I know a little bit about.." (meaning I know a great deal about..). The word litotes is from Greek litos meaning plain or meagre. Litotes is a form of [sarcasm](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sarcasm-sarcastic-definition-examples). Litotes is traditionally also called [meiosis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22meiosis).

**logo/logos** - a Greek-originating word-part ([morpheme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22morpheme-definitions)), or [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) meaning 'word' and 'words', for example in the modern word logo (an identifying symbol of a brand or corporation, etc).

**-logue** - shortened in US-English to log, logue is a [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings) which denotes a type of [discourse](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22discourse-meanings-definitions), i.e., a communication, and often a series of spoken or written communications, for example as used in catalogue, dialogue, monologue, prologue, analogue, etc. From Greek logos, word or reason.

**malapropism** - the incorrect substitution of a word by a similar-sounding word, usually in speech and with amusing effect, often used as a comedic device in light-entertainment TV shows and other comedy forms. The term derives from a character called Mrs Malaprop in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's 1775 play called The Rivals, whose lines frequently included such mistakes. Other writers, notably Shakespeare, earlier made use of the technique without naming it as such. Lord Byron in 1814 is said to have been the first to refer specifically to a malaprop as a mistaken word substitution. The term is far less popularly called a Dogberryism, after the watchman constable Dogberry character in Shakespeare's As You Like It, who makes similar speech errors.

**matronym** - a name derived from a mother or female ancestor. From Latin mater, mother. Also called a metronym. See also [patronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22patronym-definitions).

**meta-** - an increasingly common [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) referring to the use of replacement or 'hidden' forms (words, language) instead of what is normally visible or openly accessible. The increasing frequency and popularity of the 'meta-' prefix in language is substantially due to the computer age, by which so many forms of communications are coded, or accompanied by hidden processes/date/etc. Meta is Greek for with/across/[named] after.

**meta-message** - the underlying or real or hidden meaning of a communication or information/data/presentation, as distinct from the message initially taken and most obviously seen in the communication. See [meta prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22meta-prefix-meaning).

**meiosis** - traditionally equating to [litotes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22litotes) - i.e., intentional sarcastic/humorous understatement, which often includes the use of double-negative, (for example, "That's not bad..." meaning very good) to emphasize or refer ironically to the impressive nature of something, by suggesting the opposite. Meiosis is a late-medieval English term, originating 1500s, from Greek, spelt and meaning the same (meiosis = understatement), from meion, meaning less.

**metaphor** - a word or phrase which is used symbolically to represent and/or emphasize another word or phrase, typically in poetic or dramatic writing or speech, for example, 'his blood boiled with anger', or 'his eyes were glued to the screen in concentration'. A metaphor is similar to a [simile](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22simile-definitions-examples), except that a simile uses a word such as 'as' or 'like' so as to make a comparison, albeit potentially highly exaggerated, whereas a metaphor is a literal statement which cannot possibly be true. 'The criticism felt like he was drowning in a flood...' is a simile, whereas, 'The criticism was a drowning flood...' is a metaphor. [Meta](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22meta-prefix-meaning) is Greek for with/across/[named] after, hence the Greek translation/derivation of metaphor, metaphora, from metapherein, to transfer.

**metasyntactic** - a technical description referring to the use of replacement words in language when for whatever reason the actual word(s) cannot be identified, either through lack of time, care, knowledge, or permission, etc. See [Meta](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22meta-prefix-meaning) prefix. And [syntax](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22syntax-definitions). See also [placeholder names](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22placeholder-name-definitions).

**meronym** - simply a meronym means 'part of', for example, a window is a meronym in relation to a house, and a hammer is a meronym in relation to a toolkit. More specifically a meronym is a word technically referring to a part of something but which is used to refer to the whole thing, for example: 'All hands on deck' (in which 'hands' are a part of each crew member yet the word is used, as a meronym, to refer to the crew members), or 'Feet on the street' (in which 'feet' is a meronym for the people, who are on the street'). From Greek meros, part, and onoma, name. Meronym is the opposite of a holonym (a whole thing in relation to a part of the whole).

**metonym** - word/phrase used to represent the function with which it is associated - similar to a metaphor - for example the term 'Number Ten' is a metonym for the UK Prime Ministerial office and authority (by association with the address of the office at 10 Downing Street). 'The bottle' is a metonym for alcohol; 'the Crown' is a metonym for the monarchy; 'Brussells is a metonym for the EU's institutions; '(there will be) tears' is a metonym for (predicted) emotional upset; 'Twickenham' is a metonym for the England Rugby Football Union; 'the noose' and 'the chair' are metonyms for capital punishment; 'under the knife' is a metonym for surgery; 'shut-eye' is a metonym for sleep, etc. From Greek, metonumia, 'change of name'.

**metronym** - a name derived from a mother or female ancestor. More usually called a [matronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22matronym-definition). The expression 'Mother Earth' is perhaps the most fundamental universal example of all. More narrowly, any female child is given a metronym/matronym when named after a mother, grandmother or other female in the ancestral line.

**misnomer** - an inaccurate or incorrect term, name or designation, especially when established in popular or official use, although a misnomer may also be a simple once-only error of referencing or naming something. There are many different types/causes of misnomers. Some misomers originate first as correct and accurate terminology but then become misnomers because the meaning of language alters subsequently over many years. The 'ring' of a telephone is a misnomer because telephones no longer contain bells. When people refer to 'pulling the 'chain' in referring to flushing a lavatory this is also a misnomer because lavatories generally no longer have chain-pull mechanisms. The Indian food 'Bombay duck' is a misnomer because it is actually a dried fish. A ['contradiction in terms'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contradiction-in-terms-examples) or [oxymoron](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22oxymorons-examples-definitions) may also be a misnomer. [Genericized trademarks](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22genericized-trademark-examples) are misnomers. Misunderstood scientific phenomena aften produce misnomers, such as the term 'shooting star', which technically are meteors. So too is 'thunderbolt' a misnomer, because it's actually a representation of a lightning strike. The 'lead' of a pencil is a misnomer, because it is graphite. When we suggest that someone will 'catch a cold' by not wearing enough clothes in winter this is a misnomer because a cold is a virus and cannot be 'caught' from or produced by cold weather. Many creatures are named as misnomers, due to inferring a species by similarity of appearance, for example, a 'king crab' is not a crab, a 'koala bear' is not a bear, and a 'prairie dog' is not a dog. Changes in legal terminology can also produce misnomers, for example it is a misnomer to refer to sparkling wine as 'champagne' when it does not come from the Champagne region in France. The term 'football club' is a misnomer where in most cases the 'club' is a commercial company. There are thousands more misnomers in common use, and commonly people don't appreciate that the terms are technically quite wrong. A misnomer should not be confused with a [metaphor](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples), which is an intentionally symbolic term for dramatic effect.

**mnemonic** - a 'memory-aid' for a particular thing (rule, process, concept, theory, etc., or task or mental note). Examples of types of mnemonics include [acronyms](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm) (including ['bacronyms'](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22backronyms-bacronyms)) [stories](http://www.businessballs.com/stories.htm), [quotes](http://www.businessballs.com/quotes.htm), etc., and the old practice of tying a knot in one's handkerchief (reminding the owner that he/she should remember something). The word mnemonic is pronounced 'nemonic' and is commonly misspelled ('numonic'). It's from Greek mnemon, mindful. The study of the development and assistance of memory is called mnemonics or mnemotechnics. See more about [mnemonics in the business dictionary](http://www.businessballs.com/business-dictionary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Mnemonic).

**modal verb** - an additional verb which expresses necessity or possibility from the standpoint of the writer's/speaker's belief or attitude, namely the verbs: must, shall, will, should, could, would, can, may, might.

**modality** - an aspect of language which expresses necessity or possibility from the standpoint of the writer's/speaker's belief or attitude. See also [mood](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22mood-grammar-meanings).

**modulation** - in linguistics modulation refers to a change of pitch in the voice.

**mondegreen** - a misheard and wrongly interpreted [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) or phrase, from a published or quoted passage of text (obviously heard not read), especially in song lyrics, poetry, dramatic speech, etc. The effect is very close to, or may actually be in some cases defined as, an [oronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22oronym-definitions). There is some overlap also with the notion of an [egg corn](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22egg-corn-definition-examples) (which equates to an intentional [malapropism](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22malapropism) and [pun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pun-definitions-examples) hybrid). The term mondegreen was suggested by US writer Sylvia Wright in a 1954 Harpers Magazine article 'The Death of Lady Mondegreen', in which she referred to her own long-standing mistaken interpretation: 'And Lady Mondegreen' instead of the actual 'And laid him on the green' (being the last line of the first stanza from the 17th-century Scottish ballad, 'The Bonny Earl O'Moray'). Mondegreens commonly arise in song lyrics because the art form is one which ordinarily contains lots of weird words and phrases anyway, and so the imagination requires very little stretching to accept even quite ridiculous misinterpretations. Popularly referenced mondegreens include the following (and amusingly the first two examples are said to have been encouraged by the singers themselves who on occasions intentionally sang the mondegreen instead of the correct lyrics during live performances):

* 'There's a bathroom on the right,' instead of 'There's a bad moon on the rise,' in Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Bad Moon Rising'.
* 'Excuse me while I kiss this guy,' instead of 'Excuse me while I kiss the sky,' in Jimi Hendrix's 'Purple Haze'.
* 'The ants are my friends,' instead of 'The answer my friend,' in Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind'.
* 'I'm gonna f\*\*\* you,' instead of 'I'm gonna suck you,' in the play-out of T-Rex's 'Jeepster' (although Marc Bolan was arguably not attempting very hard to articulate an S instead of an F, and cynics might suggest that the preceding and somewhat incongruous line 'Girl I'm just a vampire for your love,' was merely a ploy to enable circumvention of the radio and TV censors with a hardly-disguised intentional obscene modegreen).

**monophthong** - a single vowel sound - compared with a [diphthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diphthong-definition-examples) and [triphthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22triphthong-examples-definitions). A monophthong is also called a pure vowel, because it is constant and involves no alteration in voicing. See also [diphthongization and monophthongization](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diphthongization-monophthongization), which is an extremely fundamental aspect of language development across the human race.

**mood** - in grammar 'mood' refers to a feature of a verb which enables differing expressions of possibility or necessity - called [modality](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22modality-definitions-examples) - which illustrated with examples of [modal verbs](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22modal-verbs-examples).

**mora** - a somewhat unscientific unit in [phonology](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phonology-definitions) referring to and determining 'syllable weight' in words, which commonly determines stress or timing. There seems no absolute quantification of a mora, except that one mora is a short syllable and two or three 'morae' represent proportionally longer syllables. The term monomoraic refers to a syllable of one mora. Two morae is bimoraic. Three morae is trimoraic. The word mora is from Latin mora, linger or delay.

**morpheme** - a part of a word which contains a single meaning or specific linguistic purpose, including prefixes and suffixes, and which cannot be divided, for example, single words such as 'to', 'is', 'in', 'on', etc.; verbs such as 'go', 'come', 'take', 'find', etc; nouns such as 'love', 'bread', 'deed', etc; and elements which make up larger word constructions, for example morpheme elements (separated by hyphens) in 'under-hand', or 'over-confident-ly', or 'un-flinch-ing-ly', etc. Morph means form in Greek. The 'eme' suffix derives from Greek phonema, meaning sound/speech, since morpheme follows the same structure as the French-English word [phoneme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phoneme-meanings-definitions) (a differentiating sound in a word).

**neo-** - a word [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples) meaning new or revived (notably referring to concepts, ideologies, etc) - from Greek neos, new.

**neologism** - a new word, or (technically, in psychiatry) a made-up word used by a person or child - a neologism is often although not necessarily attributable to a particular originator, and generally is a word very recently, or with the potential to be, introduced/adopted into conventional language and dictionaries (from Greek neos, new, and logos, speech). The word 'google' meaning to search the web using the Google search engine is a type of neologism, based on [eponymous](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22eponym-eponymous) principles. The word ['flup'](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22flup-full-up-expressions-origins) (from 'full-up') is an example of a neologism resulting from [contracted abbreviation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contraction-defintions-examples), as is the word ['pram'](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pram-origins) (a contracted abbreviation of the original word 'perambulator'). There are many other sorts of neologisms, which are effectively different ways in which new words evolve or become newly established.

**-ness** - a common [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings) which typically turns an adjective, or adverb, and sometimes a noun, into a noun which expresses a characteristic or state or measure of something. Obvious examples are words like happiness, sweetness, goodness, darkness, etc. In more modern times the 'ness' suffix is used to make new or made-up slang words, particularly for a specific situation, some of which can be quite amusing, or childish and silly, depending on your viewpoint, such as 'flatness of beer is a problem for drinkers who like froth', or 'over-eating produces a bigness of belly', or 'the workforce frequently suffered with can't-be-botheredness'. The 'ness' suffix originated in old Germanic languages. Other suffixes which achieve a similar effect are 'hood' (as in motherhood), 'th' (as in strength, from strong), and 'ity' (as in nudity).

**neuter** - in language neuter refers to a gender which is neither male or female - from Latin, ne, not, and uter, either.

**noun** - a word which names (is used for) something or someone, and which is not a [pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples). Variants are [proper nouns,](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22proper-noun-definitions-examples) (a name of particular person or place, usually capitalized, e.g., John, Mary, Earth, Africa, Japan, etc), and noun phrases, which . Nouns other than variants are also called 'common nouns'. From Latin nomen, name.

**noun phrase** - equating functionally to a noun, a noun phrase is two or more words which act as a noun, for example, 'leek and potato soup', or 'some green paint'. A noun phrase may contain aother noun phrases, for example, 'a two-litre pot of green paint', or the best days of our lives', or 'the shops which were open for business during the storm'. A noun phrase may be a subject or object or perform another nounal function in a sentence, for example, 'The touring party from Spain visiting Iceland (noun phrase 'subject') - longed (verb) to (preposition) go (verb) back (preposition) to (preposition) - their homes in the warm sunny countryside (noun phrase 'object').'

**object** - in grammar an object is a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples) or [pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples) which is governed by a [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples) in a sentence, for example, 'the cat (subject) sat (verb) on (preposition) the mat (object)', or 'he (subject) kissed (verb) her (object)'.

**-ology/-logy**- a suffix which denotes a subject of study or interest.

**onomatopoeia** - a word or series of words which sounds like what it means or refers to, for example 'bang', 'cuckoo', 'sizzle', 'skating skilfully on ice'. Originally from Greek onoma, name, and poios, making.

**-onym** - the suffix 'onym' is very commonly featured in this glossary - it refers to a type of name, and specifically it refers to a word which has a relationship to another word. It is from the Greek word with the same meaning, onumon, from onoma, name.

**oronym** - a word, or more usually two or more words, which, typically by changing/moving the [juncture](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22juncture-definitions) (joint - pause or emphasis), between words/syllables, or creating a new break in the word, may produce (particularly) audibly a different expression or phrase and meaning. A commonly quoted example is the phrase 'I scream', which by moving the joint may sound instead as 'ice cream', and vice-versa. A well-known amusing example is 'four candles'/'fork handles'. Oronyms enable amusing wordplay with people's names, such as 'Teresa Green/Trees are green' and 'Ben Dover/Bend over', etc. The term oronym is said to have been devised by writer Giles Brandreth in 1980, derived (very loosely indeed) from oral, meaning spoken rather than read/written, although the prefix 'oro' technically and somewhat misleadingly also implies association with the word mountain. Other examples: Beanstalk/Beans talk; New direction/Nude erection, the ironically [juxtaposed](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22juxtapose-juxtaposition-definitions)Therapist/the rapist; and the famously rude: Whale oil beef hooked/'Well I'll be fooked', and even ruder Antique hunt (work it out..). Some oronyms entail correct spellings of the alternative words/phrases, and/or related or ironic meanings, such as manslaughter/man's laughter. Oronyms that are wrongly interpreted from heard song lyrics and poetry, etc., may commonly also be referred to as [mondegreens](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22mondegreen-definitions-examples), which has a wider meaning. A popular and highly amusing category of oronyms is found among website domain names (URLs), which accidentally or intentionally contain a (usually rude or inappropriate and ironic) double-meaning, for example the now famous pen website 'penisland.com' (pen island/penis land); a forum for experts 'expertsexchange.com', and various websites dealing with therapy practitioners which use the oronym 'therapist' (therapist/the rapist). Website domain names (URLs) are especially prone to oronymic effect because prime URL convention usually entails phrases without word-spaces. Other amusing apparently (maybe) real examples of website name oronyms include: the Italian energy website 'powergenitalia.com'; the Dutch music festival 'hollandshitfestival.nl', and the laugh-out-loud wonderfully named ring-tones website 'ringtoneshits4u.com'. There are many more. The name 'slurl' (a [portmanteau](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22portmanteau/portmateau-word) of slur and url) seems to have been devised for these amusing/offensive website oronyms c.2006, by writer Andy Geldman, featuring in his book and website 'Slurls'.

**orthonym** - the real name of someone or something, opposite to a [pseudonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pseudonym-definitions-examples).

**oxymoron** - a [contradiction in terms](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contradiction-definitions-meanings), typically contained in a very short phrase or expression, such as (and including some very well-established expressions): accidentally on purpose, alone in a crowd, bitter sweet, controlled chaos, deafening silence, open secret, sweet sorrow, tough love, etc. Oxymorons may also be unintentional and result from confused or rushed thinking/speaking.

**palindrome** - a word or phrase which reads the same backwards as forwards, for example 'madam', 'nurses run', and 'never odd or even'. Palindromes tend to become increasingly daft and nonsensical with greater length, for example, 'Was it a car or a cat I saw?', or 'Eva, can I stab bats in a cave?', and 'Mr Owl ate my metal worm', and 'Do geese see God?' Generally palindrome phrases do not require that punctuation is reversible too. Palindrome may also refer to reversible numbers, notably numerical dates, for example 31.3.13 (UK date format).

**pangram/perfect pangram** - a pangram is a sentence containing every letter of the alphabet - typically a short one used in testing or demonstrating text-based communications equipment, material, typefaces, etc. Alternatively called a 'holoalphabetic sentence', the most famous and early English example is: 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog', at 35 letters (which can be shortened to 33 letters by using 'A' instead of the first 'The'). A 'perfect pangram' is a sentence containing each letter of the alphabet once only, i.e., just 26 letters. Besides offering miniscule testing efficiences, a 'perfect pangram' is mostly a curiosity and creative challenge for language enthusiasts, although no one seems yet to have devised a 'perfect pangram' which makes actual sense. Wikipedia's best example (2014) is 'Cwm fjord bank glyphs vext quiz' which definitely requires the translation: 'Carved symbols in a mountain hollow on the bank of an inlet irritated an eccentric person', ('cwm' being technically a borrowed word from Welsh meaning a steep valley). The best example of a 'perfect pangram' which contains abbreviated recognizable dictionary 'proper name' initials and other abbreviations is probably the: 'JFK got my VHS, PC and XLR web quiz'. Perfect pangrams which contain abbreviations and/or punctuation seem to attract less respect, however perhaps the shortest easily understood pangram is the impressive 29-letter: 'Bright vixens jump; dozy fowl quack', whose meaning is easily within the grasp of most children. 'Big fjords vex quick waltz nymph' is only 27 letters and maybe the best of the very short pangrams, but actually makes no sense at all. The 36-letter pangram 'Pack my red box with five dozen quality jugs' is a pleasingly sensible modern alternative to 'The quick brown fox..' The shorter but utterly idiotic 31-letter 'Jackdaws love my big sphinx of quartz', and 'Five quacking zephyrs jolt my wax bed' have been used by respectively by Microsoft and Apple operating systems in displaying fonts. Quite separately, many ordinary pangrams in non-English languages produce delightful translations into English (N.B. The non-English language versions are the pangrams, not the English translations given here), and prove that the pangram fascination is truly international, for example - 'A hiccoughing dragon spits at a driver who has reached someone else's campsite' (Bulgarian); 'Wrong practising of xylophone music bothers every larger dwarf' (German); 'A dust bat escaped through the air conditioner, which exploded due to the heat' (Hebrew); 'Lunch of water makes lopsided faces' (Italian); and the wonderful Polish perfect pangram: 'Go to the dungeon to batter the marital goose of doorframes', ('Pójdź w loch zbić małżeńską gęś futryn!'). I am open to all sorts of suggestions on this subject, especially an English perfect pangram which makes perfect sense...

**para-** - a very popular and widely used [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), meaning originally besides or next to, and especially nowadays ['analogous to'](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22analogy-definition-examples)(the word it prefixes), in the sense that something is different to but similar to, like paramilitary or paramedic. From Greek para, meaning beside.

**paradox** - a phrase, statement, or situation which contains seemingly irreconcilable or [contradictory](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contradiction-definitions-meanings) elements, and may actually be truthful or a fact, for example 'men and women can't live without each other, yet cannot live with each other', or 'people smoke tobacco in full knowledge that it is harming them', or 'a big fire burns out quicker than a little fire', or 'young men yearn to grow beards, but men grow to hate shaving'. The word paradox is Latin, originally referring in English (1500s) to a statement that opposed accepted opinion, from Greek paradoxon, contrary opinion, from para, distinct from, and doxa, opinion.

**paragraph** - a connected and related series of [sentences](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sentence-definition-examples), traditionally signified by an indented first line and/or an enlarged/decorated first letter, and/or a numbered or [bullet point](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22bullet-points-definitions-usage), and a line-break at the end of the last sentence. Modern styling increasingly does not feature the first line indent. The term paragraph is often abbreviated by writers and editors, etc., to 'para'. A paragraph may contain just one sentence or very many sentences. This glossary contains entries which each may be termed a paragraph. The word paragraph is from Greek para, beside, and [graphos](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22-graph-suffix-meanings-origins), written/writing.

**paralipsis** - a [rhetorical](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22rhetoric-definition) technique whereby a (usually negative) feature is raised/exploited by stating that it is not being so exploited. For example, 'I would not stoop so low as to exploit his past infidelities..." It's the same as [praeteritio](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22praeteritio-definitions-examples). A common retort to a speaker obviously using paralipsis, i.e., making a point while denying that the point is being made, is to say, 'But you just did..'

**paronomasia** - refers to the use or effect of a [pun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pun-definitions-examples) - where a double-meaning or 'double-entendre' of two same-spelling words or similar word sounds, produces amusing or clever or ironic effect. From 'para', Greek for 'besides', used to refer to something resembling another, or an alternative, and 'onomasia', meaning 'naming', in turn from 'onoma' meaning 'name'. See the[puns and double-meanings collection](http://www.businessballs.com/puns-double-meanings.htm).

**paronym/paranym -** a word which in relation to another word is from the same word root, and which has similar or related meaning and also which usually sounds similar, or a word which is derived from a foreign word and which retains similar meaning, form and sound, for examples: kind and kindly; quiet and quiescent (both of which derive from Latin quies, meaning being still or quiet). Para is Greek for beside.

**passage** - a short extract or section of words, spoken or in text form, typically anything in length from a single sentence upwards to a number of paragraphs.

**passive** - in grammar, applying to a verb's [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples)/[voice](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22voice-definitions-examples), passive (contrasting with its opposite '[active](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22active-definitions-examples)') generally means that the [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples) experiences the action of the verb (by an [object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples)) - for example, 'Dinner (object) was cooked (verb) by the chef (subject)' (passive voice/diathesis), rather than active voice/diathesis: 'The chef (subject) cooked (verb) dinner' (object), (active voice/diathesis).

**pathos** - a sad quality of language, especially dramatic or poetic, typically intended by the writer/speaker to make the reader/audience feel pity, sympathy, emotional, weepy, upset, etc. From Greek, pathos, suffering.

**patronym** - a name derived from a father or other male ancestor, from Greek pater, father. See also [matronym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22matronym-definition).

**person** - in the context of grammar and language 'person' refers to the classification/usage of pronouns, possessive [determiners](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22determiner-definitions) (who things/actions 'belong' to), and verb forms, according to whether they indicate the first person (speaker/writer, i.e., 'I', 'me', 'us') or second person (the 'addressee' or person being spoken/written to, i.e., 'you', singular or plural), or third person (the 'third party', i.e., 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they'). When we write/speak in the 'first person' we write/say '...I (or we) did or saw or gave or said, etc (this or that, whatever)', and we refer to 'me' and 'mine' or 'us' and 'ours'. When we write/speak in the 'second person' we write/say '...you did or saw or gave or said, etc (this, that, whatever)', and we refer to 'your' and 'yours'. When we write/speak in the 'third person' we write/say '...it was or is, etc', or 'he/she was or is, etc', or 'they were or are, etc'. The sense of 'person', and its effect on verbs, also extends to [singularity](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22singular-definitions) and [plurality](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22plural-definitions), for example the differentiation between 'I' and 'we' (respectively first person singular and plural), and 'he/she/it' and 'they' (respectively third person singular and plural). In English the word 'you' acts as both second person singular and plural, although in many other languages these would be different words.

**phonation** - the specific aspect of linguistics which is concerned with the way that sounds are 'voiced' using potentially extremely subtle control (or entailing involuntary effects) of airflow and shape/flexing of bodily tissue in the mouth area, notably vocal chords (vocal folds) and also (depending on precise and alternative definitions) the related vocal body-parts, so as to alter sounds of vowels, consonants and other vocal effects. Human beings have dramatically wide-ranging control over the way they 'voice' word-sounds, especially vowels, by controlling the vocal chords and larynx (voice-box), and generally phonation refers to the study of this and the bodily processes entailed.

**phoneme** - any unit of sound in a language which enables word sounds - (that's sounds, not spellings) - to be differentiated, for example, simply the different letter sounds p and b (in differentiating pull and bull), and c, g and j (in differentiating cut, gut and jut). The subtleties of phonemic theory are not difficult to understand - they are simply the individual sounds which make words sound different - although the detailed explanation of these effects via text-based information is only possible using quite complex phonetic symbols. The word phoneme is French, from Greek phonema, meaning speech/sound. See also [morpheme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22morpheme-definitions), which is a single indivisible unit of linguistic meaning or purpose.

**phonetics** - the study/science of speech sounds. Phonetics particularly refers to very detailed sounds of words and syllables, letters, vowels, consonants, etc., and other smaller vocalized effects which together form words and connections between words. From Greek phone, meaning sound or voice.

**phonology** - an aspect of linguistics which entails the organization, use, workings, etc., of sounds in languages. From Greek phone, meaning sound or voice.

**phrase** - a somewhat vague and widely used term which refers to a short [passage](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22passage-definitions-examples) of words, typically between three and five or six words in length, or technically just one word upwards to (far more rarely, in theory) ten or a dozen words, provided that that the meaning is limited to a single concept or expression of some sort. A phrase is technically a single concept or notion: a brief instruction, exclamation, statement, or question, and very commonly part of a [sentence](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sentence-definition-examples). Phrases may be written or spoken, and feature fundamentally in every sort of word-based communication. If a passage of words can be split into more than one set of words which each carries an independent 'stand-alone' conceptual meaning, and especially if the passage is punctuated, then the combined passage is probably, theoretically, bigger than a phrase, which is usually called a [sentence](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22sentence-definition-examples) or a [clause](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22clause-definitions-examples). This sentence is an example of a phrase. So is this one. Separated by this comma, this sentence contains two phrases. Less technically however many people would describe the previous sentence as a single phrase. The term is therefore potentially ambiguous when applied to short punctuated sentences. In common use the term phrase is frequently incorrectly applied to quite long passages or sentences, or even short paragraphs. So clarification is required where the use of the term 'phrase' has legal or other serious implications. A one word phrase is for example, 'Go' or 'Stop' or 'Why?', etc. A two-word phrase is for example, 'No smoking' or 'Keep calm' or 'Maybe tomorrow'. Technically, very long phrases are difficult to conceive, other than long lists of single items. The word phrase derives from Greek phrazein, to declare. See '[turn of phrase](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22turn-of-phrase-definition)'.

**phrase book** - a common term for a particularly light and selective type of foreign language translation dictionary, originally and specifically referring to a small or pocket volume containing only common words and phrases that are helpful for travellers/tourists, as distinct from a larger conventional translation dictionary for students of the language concerned.

**pilcrow** - the [typographical](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22typographics-typography) symbol ( ¶ ) for a paragraph, it is sometimes found in edited and published texts, although usually exists purely as a typographical marking, and also in computer code that is normally hidden, where usually it equates to a 'carriage return' (a typewriter action to begin a new line). The origins of the pilcrow symbol and name are subject to different opinions - possibly from French 'pelagraphe', paragraph, or more poetically, from 'pulled (plucked) crow'. The symbol seems to have evolved from a C with a slash through it denoting a chapter (Latin, capitulum), perhaps with other influences from old C and slash marks given in manuscripts by scribes a very long time ago.

**pitch** - the quality of vocal sound according to wavelength, i.e., the extent of high or low note range in the sound of the voice. The term pitch has more recently developed also to mean directing a talk or presentation at a particular audience, as both a verb and noun, e.g., 'he pitched an idea' and a 'sales pitch'. Pitch may also refer to the nature or quality of style or attitude of a communication.

**placeholder name** - a substitute word, (for example 'whatjamacallit', 'thingy', 'widget', 'thingamajig', 'oojamaflip', 'widget', 'gizmo', etc), commonly a 'nonsense' or childish word, for anything or anyone which for whatever reason is not or cannot be accurately named or remembered. The most popular examples according to Google 'hits' by the end of the first decade of the 2000s were: widget, hickey, gizmo, thingy, gimmick, thingie, jigger, gismo, gubbins, whatsit, thingamajig, doodad, whachamacallit, whatchamacallit, doohickey, thingo, thingamabob, thingummy, whatsis, dohickey, thingumajig, whatsaname, thingumabob, whachacallit, whatchacallit, thingmabob, dojigger, thingmajig, thingummyjig, kajigger, dooverlacky, doovalacky, doofer.. Technically the use of a placeholder name is metasyntactic, and a placeholder name is a metasyntactic variable, which is defined very well for linguistics in the terms usual computing field as: "...A conventional variable name used for an unspecified entity whose exact nature depends on context..."

**places of articulation** - also called 'points of articulation' this technical linguistics term refers to the mouth-parts involved in [articulation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22articulation-definitions) (the control of speech sounds, especially consonants, via airflow through points of articulation, i.e., mouth/vocal organs/parts by which sounds can be produced/altered). Linguistics theory generally lists about twenty places/points of articulation in and close to the human mouth, many of which involve the tongue position. Generally points 1-11 are considered passive (don't move much and are acted upon) whereas points 12-20 are active (mostly moving and acting on other parts). These are the typically stepped points although there is actually a continuum of infinite points between each of these main points, producing an infinite variety of sounds:

1. Exo-labial - upper lip
2. Endo-labial - upper lip
3. Dental - upper teeth
4. Alveolar - gum just behind teeth
5. Post-alveolar - ridge before roof
6. Pre-palatal - front of roof
7. Palatal - roof
8. Velar - back of roof
9. Uvular - hanging blob
10. Pharyngeal - top of throat (pharynx)
11. Glottal - windpipe entry (epiglottis)
12. Epiglottal - flap at tongue-base and larynx entry
13. Radical - tongue root
14. Postero-dorsal - front tongue body
15. Antero-dorsal - back tongue body
16. Laminal - tongue-blade
17. Apical - tongue tip
18. Sub-apical - under-tongue
19. Endo-labial - lower lip
20. Exo-labial - lower lip



**plagiarism** - the act of copying someone's creative (usually written) work or idea and claiming it as your own, more commonly known as 'passing off'. Plagiarism is from Latin plagium, 'a kidnapping', in turn from the Greek word plagion for the same. See also [copyright](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22copyright-definitions-examples).

**plural** - in language and grammar this contrasts with [singular](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22singular-definitions), and refers to there being more than one (typically [person](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22person-grammar-definitions)/[noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples)/[pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples)) and the effect such plurailty has on verb forms, and to a far lesser extent in English on adjectives, although in other languages many or all adjectives vary according to singularity or plurality.

**poly-** - a widely occurring [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), meaning many or much, from Greek polus, much, and polloi, many.

**polysemy** - the existence of many possible meanings for the same word or phrase (from Greek poly, many, and sema, sign).

**polysyllabic** - this refers to a word of more than two syllables, from Greek poly, many.

**portmanteau/portmanteau word** - a word made from combining two words whose combination refers to the sense or meaning of the new word - for example smog (from smoke and fog), muppet (marionette and puppet), and brunch (from breakfast and lunch). There are hundreds more examples, many of them very clever and amusing. The word portmanteau is French and is a metaphorical reference to a 'portmanteau' double sectioned case for carrying a cloak, from the separate French words porter (to carry) and manteau (cloak) - see [portmanteau](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22portmanteau_words) in the cliches origins listing for more details of origin and examples.

**praeteritio** - drawing attention to something by saying that you will not mention/exploit/be influenced by it, for example "...let us ignore the fact that he spent time in prison..." or "...he is unsuitable for the post for many reasons aside from considering his earlier bankruptcy..'. Praeteritio (pronounced 'praterishio') is speech-writing/speaking technique, typically used cynically and negatively, sometimes humorously, for a critical purpose against a political or business opponent (individual/group/oganization). In political situations praeteritio can be a very subtle method of inferring inferiority or incompetence in a competitor, and at the same time implying negative conduct among other competitors, for example, '...while other refer at length to his criminal past, I say his lack of experience and qualification alone render him the wrong person for the job...' The idiomatic '...not to mention...' is technically an introduction in a praeteritious comment, although the expression is not generally regarded as such in common speech. Praeteritio may also be used for positive aims, for example, '...I am not claiming to be the best candidate by virtue of my previous highly successful record - please forget this; I am the best candidate because I have proven credentials, the best team, and our plans have the most popular support..." Praeteritio has many equivalent terms: [paralipsis/paralepsis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Paralipsis-definition-examples), preterition, cataphasis, antiphrasis, and parasiopesis. Paralipsis is probably the most common of alternative term.

**predicate** - the part of a phrase or sentence which contains a verb and some information about the [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples).

**preposition** - prepositions are connecting positioning/relationship words like: in, on, of, to, with, under, etc. A preposition expresses a relationship between two other words or concepts, typically (but not always) appearing before a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples) or pronoun [object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples) so as to position a preceding [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples) noun or pronoun and its action (verb) in relation to the subject noun concerned, for example 'the cat sat on the mat', ('on' is the preposition), or 'she climbed down the ladder', ('down' is the proposition), or 'she bought it for me', ('for' is the preposition). Prepositions do not necessarily appear between subject and object, for example in the phrases 'the world (object) we (subject) live (verb) in (preposition)', or 'in (preposition) which world (object) we (subject) live (verb)'. Historically conventional English rules asserted that a sentence should not end with a preposition, for example, 'What did you go there for?', although nowadays this is not generally thought to be incorrect grammar. Examples of prepositions are: to, on, over, of, out, for, upon, in, with, against, up, under, between, etc. The word derives from its logical meaning, i.e. pre, before, and position, to place.

* A preposition curiosity: Can you think of a proper meaningful sentence that finishes with seven consecutive prepositions?... Firstly the scene-setter: A mother goes downstairs to find a book for her son's bedtime story. When she returns with a book about Australia, her son says, "Why did you get a book to read out of about down under up for?" (In this context 'down under' is technically a noun, but it's still a clever and amusing word puzzle.)

**prefix** - a word-part that has been/is added to the front of a word or word stem, such as 'pre' (meaning before, as in prefix and prequalify), and 'mis' (meaning wrongly, such as misbehave, mistake, etc) and 'anti' (meaning against, as in antifreeze, or antidisestablishmentarianism), and 'homo' (meaning same, as in homogeneous, homosexual, although confusingly 'Homo Sapien' is Latin, meaning literally 'man wise'). See also [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings), which is a word-ending. In recent years the prefixes 'i' and 'e' have become very widely seen prefixes in referring to 'internet' and 'electronic', for example the Apple brands iPhone, iTunes, etc., and the generic terms e-book, and email. Understanding prefixes is helpful for interpreting the meaning of new words. For example see [poly-](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22poly-prefix-meanings), and [hyper-/hypo-](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hypo-hyper-prefix).

**pronoun** - a word which acts instead of a noun - for example, you, me, it, this, that, etc. From Latin pro, 'for, on behalf of', and noun.

**proper noun** - a name (i.e., [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples)) for a particular person or place or other entity, such as a brandname or corporation, which usually warrants a capitalized first letter, for example, Rome, Caesar, Jesus, Scrabble, Texaco, etc.

**proto-** - a prefix meaning first, as in prototype, from Greek protos, first.

**pseudepigrapha/pseudepigraph** - literary or written works which claim to have been created by a notable author, but which are basically fake, much like an artwork painted in the style of a famous artist including a forged signature.

**pseudo-** a [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), referring to a false or artificial version of something, from Greek pseudes, false. The pseudo prefix is commonly added to all sorts of terms to refer to a fake or imitation, especially something normally quite serious and well-qualified, for example, pseudo-science, or pseudo-intellectual.

**pseudonym** - an alternative name for a person or group, thing, etc., adopted usually to avoid using/revealing the true name and for marketing/image purposes, or given by others for various reasons because the pseudonym name is considered more appropriate, or simply that it is easier to pronounce and remember, or translates better internationally. Pseudonyms are most commonly associated with authors/writers (for which they are called pen names), but pseudonyms can instead be stage names or screen names (of actors), aliases (also expressed as 'aka' = 'also known as' - often associated with criminals), nicknames (particularly that are widely used and recognized), usernames, names of titled people or officials, monarchs, and popes, etc. Examples of pseudonyms are: John le Carré, George Orwell, Joseph Conrad, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Pope Francis I, C S Forester, John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, Ellery Queen (actually two authors using a single pseudonym), Elizabeth R, Pelé, George Eliot (actually a woman using a male pseudonym), Scary Spice, Ayn Rand, etc. There are thousands of them. A true name is called a [orthonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22orthonym). Pseudonym is from Greek pseudes, meaning false.

**pun** - also called [paronomasia](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22paronomasia), a pun refers to a double-meaning, where a word is used instead of another more obviously contextual word which has very similar or the same sound, and may or may not have different spelling, and which has different yet related meaning. The famous quote 'Time flies like and arrow; fruit flies like a banana' features the pun on the word 'flies'. The quote 'A broken window is a pain' features the pun of 'pain' with window 'pane'. Puns may also feature more than one word as the substitute and/or substituted words, for example 'If a leopard could cook would he ever change his pots?' where 'his pots' is punned with 'his spots'. Puns may also entail phrases too, for example 'Cadaver industry regulation - bodies are weak and lack teeth' where 'bodies are weak and lack teeth' refers both to decaying corpses and also to regulatory bodies lacking power and authority. For more examples see the [puns and double-meanings collection](http://www.businessballs.com/puns-double-meanings.htm).

**punctuation** - marks in writing, such as commas, full-stops (periods), question marks, etc., which indicate separations, pauses, emphasis, status, mood, ownership, etc., and which overall guide the reader/speaker as to flow, meaning, context, etc., of the text concerned. Punctuation differs from [diacritical marks](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diacritics), which indicate letter/word-sound pronunciation. Here are the main examples of punctuation and some other marks which have a punctuating or similar effect in language:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **punctuation name** | **symbol(s)** | **purpose/usage/effect** |
| full-stop/period | . | Ends a sentence, a significant pause before resuming next [sentence](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#sentence-definition-examples). |
| comma | , | Ends a phrase, slight pause, connects phrases or listed items. |
| semicolon | ; | Ends a phrase, a longer pause than a comma, shorter than a period. |
| colon | : | Prefaces a list or example or quote or other referenced item, with a pause equating to a semi-colon. |
| question mark | ? | Prompts or demands an answer or consideration at the end of a phrase. |
| exclamation mark | ! | Adds [emphasis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#emphasis) at the end of a phrase. Denotes loud speech or surprise or indignation. |
| hyphen/dash | - or — | Connects hyphenated words or [prefixes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#prefix-definitions-examples) or [suffixes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#suffix-definitions-meanings); an alternative to brackets surrounding a phrase; an alternative to a comma or semicolon; and alternative to the word 'to' in dates and times, etc. |
| [apostrophe](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#apostrophe) | ' or ’ | Denotes ownership, missing letters, or alternative to speech marks. Slanted style is traditional and older. |
| speech/quotation marks | " " or “ ” | Surround and denote speech or quote or extracted content. Slanted style is older traditional design, sometimes called 66 99, the designs are respectively called 'open quotes' and 'close quotes'. |
| [paragraph](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#paragraph-definitions-examples) | line-break and indent | Not a punctuation symbol, but still punctuation, for breaking separate passages, a longer pause than a period. The first line of the new paragraph is usually indented. |
| brackets | ( ) [ ] | Surround and denote relevant or helpful supplementary or incidental information, which is usually not crucial to main point. |
| [ditto](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#ditto-meanings-origins) mark | " or - " - | Appears in columns and lists signifying ditto, i.e., 'same as above'. |
| slash/virgule | / | Alternative for 'or'; alternative for 'and' (in a combined sense); denotes abbreviation of a two-letter term (e.g., w/e for weekend or week ending); internet address file/directory separator; indicator of line-break in typographical mark-up instruction/notes; signifies 'divided by' in mathematics; and various others. Also called solidus, stroke, forward slash and more - it's a very useful and powerful symbol. |
| backslash | \ | Far less common in [typography](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#typographics-typography) and writing, but increasingly common in computerized communications, notably in file and directory separators. |
| underline/underscore | \_ or \_\_\_ | Adds emphasis to underlined passage. Single underscore symbol is used as alternative to hyphen to make continuous unbroken filenames and other electronic data. |
| [asterisk(s)](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm#asterisk) | \* or \*\* | Indicates that a related note appears later in text, which is also marked by an asterisk. Where the technique is soon repeated two asterisks are used, and so on, to avoid confusion. Asterisks are also used as replacement letters in offensive words by some publications. |
| guillemets/angle quotes/French quotes | « » | Surround and denote speech or quote in some non-English foreign languages, as alternative speech marks. Named after french printer Guillaume Le Bé (1525-98). |

**reduplication** - in language, reduplication refers to the repeating of a syllable or sound, or a similar sound, to produce a word or phrase. For example, mumbo-jumbo, higgledy-piggledy, helter-skelter, reet-petite, easy-peasy, maybe-baby, bananarama, tuti-fruiti, see-saw, curly-wurly, scooby-doo, looby-loo, hurly-burly, pac-a-mac, touchy-feely, in it to win it, etc. Unavoidably all examples of reduplication are also examples of [alliteration](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22alliteration-meaning), although many examples of alliteration are not reduplication. Reduplication generally entails the repeating of larger word-sections than alliteration.

**rhetoric** - writing or speech for persuasive or impactful effect. Typical users of rhetoric are salespeople, politicians, leaders, teachers, etc. The term 'rhetorical question' means a question designed to produce an effect - typically to make a statement or point - rather than seeking an answer or information. The word is from ancient Greek, rhetor, an orator or teacher of persuasive effective speaking.

**rights-holder** - the owner of legal rights (i.e., control, usually by virtue of creation and/or ownership) such as copyright or other [intellectual property](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22intellectual-property-definitions-examples).

**rubric** - a document heading or a set of instructions or rules, or a statement of purpose. Rubric generally refers to headings/rules contained in formal documents, for example in examination papers, or processes stipulated by an authority of some sort, for example the instructions on a parking penalty ticket, or on licensing applications. The origins of the word are fascinating, from Roman Latin in which 'rubeus' meant red, and 'rubrica terra' referred to the 'red earth' and its derivative material used to make an early form of ink. Roman practice was to use red ink for laws and rules, which established the association between red 'rubrica' ink and formal written instructions.

**sarcasm** - cynical or sceptical understatement (including [litotes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22litotes)), overstatement, statement of the obvious, exaggeration, or [irony](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22irony-ironic-definitions-examples) used for negative effect, for example to mock, criticize, ridicule, patronize, insult, or make fun of someone or something. Sarcasm may be characterized by the [tone](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tone-definitions) of voice more than the words themselves. Context is genarally crucial to appreciate sarcasm.

**semantic/semantics** - semantic refers to the meaning of language, or less typically the meaning of logic. The word is commonly used to clarify that a disagreement might be semantic, or a matter of semantics (interpretation of the meaning of words used to frame the argument), rather than a true disagreement about the matter itself. For example it can be difficult to agree training methods with another person, until semantic agreement is first established about the word 'training', i.e., whether 'training' refers to skills, knowledge, attitude, etc.

**Semiotics/semiology** - Semiotics is the study of how meaning is conveyed through language and non-language signage such as symbols, stories, and anything else that conveys a meaning that can be understood by people. Semiotics relates to linguistics (language structure and meaning), and more broadly encompasses linguistics and all other signage, metaphor and symbolism. The processing aspect of semiotics is called semiosis. Semiotics features strongly in the form of [Stimulus Response Compatibility](http://www.businessballs.com/nudge-theory.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22semiotics) in [Nudge theory](http://www.businessballs.com/nudge-theory.htm). Within semiotics, the arrangement of words is called syntax, and its study/science is called syntactics. Semiotics contain **logic**, and **anthropological** factors [humankind], i.e., effects are based on unchanging logic (for example big is generally more impactful than small), and also based on human factors such as genetics, evolution, culture, and conditioning.

**sentence** - a sentence is usually a string of words which contains (as a minimum) a complete and grammatically correct statement, question, command, etc., typically including a [predicate](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22predicate-definitions-examples) and [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples), for example (and a very short one): "I ate." (In this extremely short example, 'I' is the subject, and 'ate' informs the reader/listener about the subject. Technically, depending on context, a single word may be considered to be a sentence, for example: "Why?" and "Yes." These single words can be described as sentences because they stand alone as complete and grammatically correct statements. A longer example of a sentence, entailing lots of [punctuation](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22punctuation-examples-meanings), is: "We ate a meal at a restaurant, of fish landed in the local port, and vegetables grown in the restaurant garden - all washed down by wine produced in a nearby vineyard; made especially memorable by the wonderful music, hospitaility, and attention of our hosts."

**singular** - in language and grammar this contrasts with [plural](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22plural-definitions), and refers to there being only one (typically [person](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22person-grammar-definitions)/[noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples)/[pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples)) and the effect such singularity has on verb forms, and to a far lesser extent in English on adjectives, although in other languages many or all adjectives vary according to singularity or plurality.

**simile** - a descriptive technique in writing, speaking, communicating, etc., by which something is compared symbolically to something else of more dramatic effect or imagery, for example, 'cold as ice', 'quiet as a mouse', 'tough as old boots', etc. The word 'as' is common in similes, or often a simile is constructed using the word 'like', for example, 'the snow fell like tiny silver stars', or 'he ordered food from the menu like he had not eaten for a month'. A simile is similar to a [metaphor](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22metaphor-definitions-examples), except that a simile uses a word such as 'as' or 'like' so as to make it a comparison, albeit potentially highly exaggerated, whereas a metaphor is a literal statement which cannot possibly be true. 'He fought like a lion' is a simile, whereas 'He was a lion fighting' is a metaphor. The word simile is from Latin similis, like.

**slang** - informal language, typically understood by a group of people and not necessarily understood well or at all by others outside of the group, primarily used in speech; far less commonly written. Examples are individual slang words, and entire 'coded' languages, such as [backslang](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22backslang-examples) and [cockney rhyming slang](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22cockney-rhyming-slang).

**sheva/shva** - a phonetically neutral short vowel sound, for example at the end of the word 'sofa' - rather like a very short 'eh' or 'ah' - this is the same as a schwa or sh'wa - all are originally from the Hebrew language.

**snake\_case** - compound words joined by underscores, which has become popular in computer text due to the benefits of avoiding gaps in filenames, domain names and URLs (website/webpage addresses), etc. See also [CamelCase](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22CamelCase-definition) - no spaces, differentiation via capitals - camel alludes to humpy wordshapes.

**spoonerism** - an accidental or intended inversion or exchange of word sounds between two words which produces two new words which may or may not be intelligible, and which is usually thought amusing. A long-standing example is that of "...a cat popping on its draws..." (instead of 'dropping on its paws'). The effect is named after Reverend William Archibald Spooner (1844-1930), a warden of New College, Oxford, who has long been said prone to the error. A spoonerism is apparently also known (very rarely) as a marrowsky, supposedly after a Polish count, reputed to be similarly afflicted. See more detail of origins and [examples of funny spoonerisms](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22spoonerisms_words_origins) in the cliches and word origins listing.

**stem** - the stem of [word](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22word-definitions) - a 'word-stem' - is the main part or root of a word to which other parts such as a prefix and/or suffix are added. For an extreme example, the stem of the word 'antidisestablishmentarianism' is 'establish'.

**stress** - in detailed linguistics, and especially [phonetics](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22phonetics-definitions), stress equates to the emphasis given to a syllable or syllables or other speech sounds within a word or words to determine or alter pronunciation, or control other audible effect of a word. Separately and more generally, stress in language has an additional meaning, referring to placing emphasis on a particular word or phrase, as would be shown by emboldening or capitalizing the stressed sections of a passage of text.

**subject** - in grammar a subject is a [noun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22nouns-definitions-examples) or [pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples) which governs (does something to or in relation to) an [object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples) in a sentence, for example, 'the lion (subject) chased (verb) the zebra (object)', or 'we (subject) crossed (verb) over (preposition) the road (object)'.

**suffix** - a word-ending, which may have a word-meaning in its own right, but more commonly does not, and is commonly from Latin or Greek, and acts as a combination-part in building words and their meaning. There are many thousands of examples of suffixes, and almost unavoidably virtually any word of more than one syllable contains a suffix, and very many words of a single syllable contain a suffix too. Many suffixes alter the sense or tense of a word, for example, the simple 's' suffix is used in English to denote plural. The 'x' suffix denotes a plural in many French-English words. The '[ness](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ness-suffix-meanings)' suffix (origin old Germanic) refers to the state or a measure of a (typically adjective) term enabling it to be expressed as a feature or characteristic, for example, boldness, happiness, rudeness, etc. The suffix [tomy](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tomy-suffix-meaning) refers to many surgical processes. The suffix 'ation' is very common - it turns a verb into a noun, (for example examination, explanation, and the recently popular among financial markets commentators, 'perturbation'). The '[age](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22age-suffix-examples)' suffix is another which develops a word to express a measurable degree. Not surprisingly the suffix '[onym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22-onym-meanings-origins)' features perhaps more commonly in this glossary than you will ever encounter it elsewhere, because it means a type of name, and specifically a word which has a relationship to another. Very many words, formed as combinations or [contractions](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22contraction-defintions-examples) of two words, entail the use of the first word as a [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), and the second word as a suffix, for example obvious combination words such as breakfast, cupboard, forehead, railway, television, aeroplane, saucepan, etc., and less obvious combination words like [window](http://www.businessballs.com/clichesorigins.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22window-word-origins), and many thousands more. See also [prefix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22prefix-definitions-examples), which is a [morpheme](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22morpheme-definitions) or larger word-part acting as a word-beginning.

**syllable** - a single unit of pronunciation typically comprising a [vowel](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22vowel-definitions) sound without or with one or two [consonants](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22consonants-definitions-examples) - perhaps best illustrated by examples of single-syllable words: and, to, in, of, we, us, but, grab, grabbed, yacht, reach, reached, strings, etc., and two-syllable words such as: baby, table, angry, frightened, tangled, enraged, etc., and three-syllable words such as: holiday, enemy, ebony. As you can see the number of letters and word-parts ([morphemes](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22morpheme-definitions)) does not determine the number of syllables. For example the word 'antidisestablishmentarianism' has eleven syllables and only 28 letters. The following words each have ten letters yet only one syllable: scraunched (the sound of walking on gravel); schmaltzed (imparted sentimentality); scroonched (squeezed), schrootched (crouched), and strengthed (an old variant of strengthened). The word syllable is from Greek sullabe, from sun, together, and lambanein, take.

**syllogism** - a proposition in which a conclusion or 'fact' is inferred from two or more related 'facts'. For example: Big cats are dangerous; a lion is a big cat; (therefore) lions are dangerous. Or: Diamonds are precious gems; precious gems are sometimes stolen; (therefore) diamonds are sometimes stolen. A syllogism may comprise more than two 'facts' which together support the conclusion, for example: A mouse is bigger than a fly; a cat is bigger than a mouse; a horse is bigger than a cat; an elephant is bigger than a horse; (therefore) an elephant is bigger than a fly (and so is a horse and a cat).

**synonym** - a word or phrase which means the same as or equates to another, for example, high and tall, or round and circular, or a word or phrase which is used to represent, characterize, or allude to another, for example, 'the swinging 60s' synonymously refers to the optimism and liberated lifestyle of that time, and the term 'nuts and bolts' is used a synonym for technical details of a project or plan (from Greek sunonumon, from sun, with and onuma, name). See also [antonym](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22antonym-definitions), a word which means the opposite of another.

**syntactics** - the study/science of the arrangement of words within language, and especially within sentences which seek to convey clear meaning. The arrangement of words is called [syntax](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22syntax-definitions), which is the root word of syntactics.

**syntax** - syntax refers technically to how words and phrases are structured to form sentences and statements, and more generally to the study of language structure. The word is very logically derived from from Greek, suntaksis, from sun, together, taksis, arrangement, from tasso, I arrange.

**synecdoche** - a word or possibly short phrase which refers to a people or things in a [figurative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22figurative-meaning-definitions) sense, based on a significant component or effect found in the thing it represents, for example referring to sailors as 'hands', or cowboys as 'guns', or group members as 'heads, or lookouts as 'eyes and ears'.

**tautology** - this has two main meanings - first and simplest, (sometimes called the semantic meaning) a tautology is a statement in which a point or description is repeated using different wording, usually considered grammatically incorrect (not factually incorrect), or at best clumsy and an inefficient use of language, for example: "They arrived together at the same time...", or "An empty void...", or the very common, "At this moment in time..", or "The incredible achievement defied belief...", or "The eggs and milk were combined together..." . Usually the words 'and' and 'also' next to each other in a statement produce a very simple tautology (because 'also' and 'and' mean the same and so together represent an unnecessary repeat of the same thing). Where the repeat (tautology) is for stylistic or dramatic effect, for example: "The last, final breath...", the tautology is more acceptable and may not be considered poor grammar. A tautology used for dramatic effect is similar to [hendiadys](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hendiadys-definitions). Second, (in a more theoretical or scientific context, sometimes called the logical or rhetorical tautology) a tautology is a lot more complex and potentially so difficult to explain that people may resort to using algebraic equations. A simple example is a statement containing a claim whose validity is dependent on repeating the same point within the statement, or expressed another way, is a statement which is valid by virtue of the claims or assumptions within it, for example, "Civilizations have always sought to gather and protect gold because it is so valuable and desirable...". (We can neither argue with this, nor prove it beyond the limits of its own assumptions.) There are more complex mathematical and scientific interpretations of a tautology than cannot be explained here in this glossary, because this glossary is mainly concerned with grammar and day-to-day communications rather than scientific applications - and also because the complicated interpretations completely baffle me, as well as most other people aside from mathematicians). Whatever, tautologies at a simple level are particularly fascinating because they are used (and accepted without question by most audiences) extremely frequently in political statements and media commentaries. Tautologies are commonly used to persuade others by weight of argument, rather than substance. Perhaps the biggest example of a persuasive tautology, even at the very highest level of leadership and government is, "Our decisions and actions were correct because it was the right thing to do... ". Next time you hear this you will recognize it as a tautology, and if you hear it appended with the qualifying "...and God will be my judge...", then be very worried indeed; the speaker is simply saying: "I'm right because I say I am."

**tautonym** - originally this meant and still mainly refers to a biological [taxonomical](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22taxonomy-definitions-examples) name in which the same word is used for the genus and species, for example Vulpes vulpes, (the red fox). In language/linguistics a tautonym generally and informally refers to a [reduplicative](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22reduplication-definition-examples) word, containing two identical parts, or such as bye-bye, or bon-bon.

**taxonomy** - a structural organization of classifications, almost always hierarchical, like a family tree, with levels of categories/classes, each comprising sub-sets, in turn comprising sub-sets. The concept of taxonomies primarily developed in biology but now can be found in classifications of virtually anything, for example [Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains](http://www.businessballs.com/bloomstaxonomyoflearningdomains.htm).

**tense** - in grammar the term 'tense' refers to the form of a verb which indicates when in time the action happened, or an aspect of the continuity/completion of the act, in relation to the action itself and also the time at which the action/happening is spoken or written about. The three main common tenses are: past tense ('I went'), present tense ('I go') and future tense ('I will go'). Some tenses are extremely complex, for example: 'I was to have been going'. Answers on a postcard please as to what that tense might be.

**the** - the word 'the' is technically/grammatically 'the definite article', for example 'The bird fell out of the sky', or 'The muddy children need bathing'. It's called 'the definite article' because it specifies a definite thing/person, that is known or can be identified from the context. This is different to 'the indefinite article' (a or an), which makes a non-specific or general reference to something.

**-tomy** - tomy is a common [suffix](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22suffix-definitions-meanings), occasionally seen in language terminology (e.g., [dichotomy](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dichotomy-definitions-meaning)), where it alludes to a process or situation requiring resolution, although the tomy suffix is far more often seen in medical procedure terminology (vasectomy, lobotomy, etc); it's from Greek tommia, cutting.

**tone** - in language tone refers generally to the quality of the voice and vocal sounds in terms of [pitch](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pitch-definitions), strength, and other qualities of sound and style or mood, for example 'an angry tone of voice' or 'a harsh tone of voice' or 'he spoke in hushed tones'. Tone of language may refer to qualities of sound, feeling, attitude, volume, pace, and virtually any other quality that might be imagined for verbal, or indeed written or printed communications too. Broadly when referring to communications, tone equates to the nature or type or description of the language and how the meaning is conveyed.

**trademark** - a registered and protected name (or logo) of a product, brand or organization, usually signified by the TM abbreviation. The trademark word/concept is not technically a grammatical or linguistics term but trademarks are often very significant in language and language development, notably when a trademark becomes 'genericized'. A generic trademark, also known as a [genericized trademark](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22genericized-trademark-examples) or proprietary eponym, is a trademark or brand name that has become the [generic](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22generic-definition-examples)name for, or synonymous with, a general class of product or service, against the usual intentions of the trademark's holder. Using a genericized trademark to refer to the general form of what that trademark represents is a form of metonymy.

**trichotomy** - a three-part classification, notably found in the form of rules, laws, models, processes, etc. For example ; the [Parent/Adult/Child in Transactional Analysis](http://www.businessballs.com/transact.htm); the [Visual/Audio/Kinaesthetic in the VAK Learning model](http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm); and the traditional concept of communicating [Features/Advantages/Benefits in selling and sales training](http://www.businessballs.com/salestraining.htm). There are several thousand other trichotomous rules, laws, principles, etc., and they are found in any discipline or subject that you can imagine.

**triphthong** - a monosyllabic vowel sound (not a single vowel) which effectively contains or moves through three different discernible vowel sound qualities. It's from Greek 'triphthongos', meaning 'with three sounds/tones'. See also [diphthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diphthong-definition-examples), which generally refers to there being two different sounds in one vowel-sound syllable. [Monophthong](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22monophthong) refers to a single pure vowel syllable sound.

**trisyllable** - a word or (technically in poetry) a line of poetry containing three syllables.

**trope** - a trope is a word or phrase that is substituted metaphorically or symbolically to create an expression of some sort. For example, the expression 'Earn a crust' uses the word 'crust' as a trope. The expression 'It's raining cats and dogs' uses the phrase 'cats and dogs' as a trope. To say that someone has a 'razor wit' uses the word 'razor' as a trope. From Greek, tropos, meaning turn or way.

**turn of phrase** - an old expression referring to a particular way of using (usually spoken) language which is quirky, coarse, amusing, clever, or otherwise unusual. The term is generally applied to a known/named person; far less commonly to a group. Often the term is used [euphemistically](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Euphemism) and [ironically](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22irony-ironic-definitions-examples), for instance in referring to a person's use of rude, '[non-pc](http://www.businessballs.com/business-dictionary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22political-correctness-pc-non-pc)', or offensive words, for example, "He has an interesting turn of phrase". The term may also be used literally, for example, "She has an sharp/clever/amusing turn of phrase," when referring to someone whose speech/writing includes such a quality.

**typo** - a slang abbreviation derived from the full meaning 'typographical error/mistake', used by writers, publishers and printers, originally referring to a mistake (typically spelling or punctuation) in the typesetting stage of publishing, as distinct from a writer's error of fact/spelling. The slang term is nowadays used more widely in referring to a 'keyboard' mistake by writers of all sorts, and by agencies involved in printing and media, as distinct from an error due to a writer's poor spelling or inaccurate facts. Originally the process of publishing involved clearly separated stages of writing/origination, then typesetting (at which printing plates were made), then printing. Sometimes errors of interpretation or inaccuracy occurred at the typesetting stage, which might or might not be noticed before printing. Such errors were called typos, and the term has survived and thrived into modern times. The technological development of publishing now enables writers and editors to control final output far more reliably and directly, so the 'typo' expression now mostly refers simply to a writer's keyboard error.

**typographics/typography** - the study or art of designing and producing letters and other symbols ([glyphs](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22glyph)) used in printing and other textual reproduction, excluding handwriting. The word 'type' refers to the traditional lead letter-blocks used in traditional typesetting and printing. The word typographics derives from Greek type, meaning form, and [graphos](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22-graph-suffix-meanings-origins), writing.

**typeface** - an old traditional word for what is nowadays called a [font](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22font), or more technically and traditionally a font family. Historically a typeface referred more to a font family, comprising slightly varying styles of lettering and other glyphs all based around a main design.

**verb** - traditionally children are taught that a verb is 'a doing word', which is a good definition. We might extend it to 'a doing or happening word'. More technically a verb is the 'predicate' (this describes what is happening to the subject) in a phrase or sentence. Most statements comprise as a minium: a subject (which is doing something, often acting on or affecting or experiencing the effect of an object), an object (something which is being acted upon or affected by or affecting a subject), and a verb (which describes the action or affect). For example: The cat ([subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples)) sat (verb) on the mat ([object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples)). It is very difficult to compose a meaningful sentence without a verb. Some of the shortest sentences contain just a subject and a verb, for example: 'He wept'. 'He' is the subject, 'wept' is the verb, and there is no object. The sentence 'It rained' contains the subject 'it' and a verb 'rained' ('it' is a [pronoun](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22pronoun-definitions-examples) and technically a substitute for something implied such as 'the weather' or 'at that time' or 'at that location'). The sentence 'I was happy' contains 'I' (subject), 'was' (verb) and 'happy' ([adjective](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22adjectives-definitions-examples) describing the subject). The sentence 'I ran quickly' contains 'I' (subject), 'ran' (verb), and 'quickly' ([adverb](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22adverbs-definitions-examples) describing the verb). The word 'verb' is Latin, from 'verbum', meaning 'verb', and originally 'word'. A significant aspect of a verb in use is its '[voice](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22voice-definitions-examples)' or [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples), which refers to whether the verb is acting [actively](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22active-definitions-examples) (the [subject](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22subject-definitions-examples) is doing something to the [object](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22object-definitions-examples)) or [passively](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22passive-definitions-examples) (the object is having something done to it by the subject).

**verbal** - the word verbal mainly means 'consisting of words' but commonly particularly refers to spoken words, such as a 'verbal warning' (as distinct from a written one). Technically verbal may also refer to something related to a verb, such as verbal meaning or verbal application (for example of a word which could be regarded as a noun or other form of grammar, such as 'The word plant may be used in a verbal sense, as well as referring to flower, which is a noun').

**verbatim** - an English term from Latin, meaning 'word for word', used when referring to quoting or recounting previous communications of some sort. It's from Latin verbum, meaning word.

**verb phrase** - there are several slightly different complex technical explanations for this, so it's easier to consider the definition as all the parts of a (subject-verb-object) statement without the subject, for example, in the statement 'Peter went to the office', the verb phrase is 'went to the office'. In the statement 'The children played noisily in the garden', the verb phrase is 'played noisily in the garden'. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a verb phrase as: '...a verb with another word or words indicating the verb's [tense](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22tense-verbs-definitions), [mood](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22mood-grammar-meanings) or [person](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22person-grammar-definitions) (tense being past, present, future, etc; mood relating to [modality](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22modality-definitions-examples), being the speaker's/writer's sense of certainty, possibility, necessity, etc; and person referring to first, second or third, as in I, you, he, etc.)

**vernacular** - the language and/or [dialect](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dialect-definitions-meanings) of the ordinary people of a particular region or area, or the language of a group of people formed around a purpose or discipline or other interest. Vernacular may refer to sounds ([accents](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22accent-definitions)) and/or to words and/or the construction of language, spoken or written. Vernacular may also refer to one's native or mother tongue. Vernacular is a noun, although it seems like an adjective. The word derives from Latin vernaculus, 'native' or 'domestic', interestingly ultimately from verna, a 'home-born slave'.

**voice** - also called [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples) - in English grammar this refers to whether a verb, including its related construction, is active or passive; for example 'the teacher taught the class' is an active voice/diathesis, whereas 'the class was taught by the teacher' is a passive voice/diathesis. Some other languages offer a 'middle voice' which is neither active nor passive. In communicating sensitively it is often helpful to consider whether active or passive voice is best for the situation, considering also the verb and context. Commonly passive voice/diathesis of verb constructions are less likely to offend or unsettle people, however for certain verbs/situations the opposite may be true. See [diathesis](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22diathesis-definitions-examples) and [active](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22active-definitions-examples) and [passive](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22passive-definitions-examples) for more detailed explanation and examples.

**vowel** - a letter or speech sound in language produced by an open vocal tract, involving little or no friction or restriction of the sound through the mouth or airway. Speech basically comprises vowels and [consonants](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22consonants-definitions-examples), consonants being letters/sounds involving restriction or friction of sound. Vowels generally form the basis or core of syllable. Vowels in English are commonly regarded as the letters a e i o u, although many more sounds are also vowels, such as those made by the letters ee, oo, oy, y (as an 'ee' or 'i' sound), etc. Definition of 'vowel' therefore varies. The letters a e i o u are generally considered to be the pure vowels, in terms of differentiating vowels from consonants in the English alphabet, although beyond this narrow context 'y' is certainly be regarded as a vowel sound represented by a single letter.

**vowel shift** - a change in the sound of vowel pronunciation, typically when describing language of a group and its change over time, for example the 'Great Vowel Shift' which introduced longer vowel sounds to the modern age, shifting the style from the shorter vowel sounds of the middle ages. We might also refer to vowel shift in the context of a change in [dialect](http://www.businessballs.com/grammar-language-glossary.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22dialect-definitions-meanings) when someone lives for a while in a different region with different vowel sounds in local language.

**vox** - Latin for voice, appearing in English notably in the expression 'vox pop'.

**vox pop/vox populi** - 'vox pop' means popular opinion, from 1500s Latin 'vox populi' (voice of the people), typically gleaned from and referring specifically to quick street interviews by radio/TV broadcasters of members of the public, termed in the media as a 'man on the street interview', often pluralized to 'vox pops'. Cynics might reasonably suggest that substantial and increasingly large proportions of 'news' and 'current afairs' broadcasting comprise completely meaningless and thoughtless vox pops, presented as if it were all objective and wise comment on the subject concerned.

**word** - a single unit of speech or writing. Beyond this simple definition, the word 'word' is a fascinating concept to define, and is open to considerable debate. The modern Oxford English Dictionary gives these two basic definitions for the essential grammatical meaning of 'word': "... a single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, used with others (or sometimes alone) to form a sentence and typically shown with space on either side when written or printed." [or separately] "...a single distinct conceptual unit of language, comprising inflected and variant forms." There are other official dictionary definitions of the word 'word' when used in different contexts, for example in usage such as: 'word on the street' (in which 'word' refers to gossip and discussion, etc); 'don't believe a word of it' (in which 'a word' refers to all discussion including the smallest element such as a single letter or number); 'give me your word' (in which word equates to a promise or agreement); 'just say the word' (in which word means go-ahead or permission or command); and verb forms such as in 'the best way to word a letter' (in which word means write or style). Traditionally printed book dictionaries were considered the arbiters of words, so that only 'words' which were listed and defined in printed book dictionaries were 'proper words'. In more enlightened times however dictionaries have increasingly become regarded as records and collections of words which are in popular use in day-to-day conversation and various writing by people - despite what dictionaries contain. This is to say that words change and evolve and appear in actual real language far sooner than they do in dictionaries. Dictionaries of course record and organize words that are in use, but they do not dictate or design new words. Ordinary people do this.

**zeugma** - where a word applies to two different things in the same sentence, typically with confusing, incongruous or amusing effect. Lord Byron is noted for his amusing use of zeugma, for example the wonderful line in his epic poem Don Juan, "Seville is a pleasant city, famous for oranges and women..."