

A guide to



rainbow
grammar

at

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A Quick Guide to Rainbow Grammar

Colour	Year	Example	Description
Subject	1	The monster screamed in the attic. The children cried all night.	A subject tells us <i>who</i> or <i>what</i> a sentence is about and performs the action in a sentence. There may be several subjects in a sentence but only the main one is coloured green.
Predicate	1	The monster screamed in the attic . Angrily , the monster screamed in the attic . The children cried all night . All night , the children cried .	The predicate tells us what the subject did or what happened to the subject. It always contains a verb but might also include adverbials which describe <i>when</i> , <i>where</i> or <i>how</i> the verb is performed. These adverbials can be moved to the start of the sentence become fronted adverbials.
Stop	1	The monster screamed loudly in the attic! The children cried all night.	The stop completes a sentence. The full stop, exclamation mark and question mark are all used as stops.
Speech	2	" I want my Teddy! " the monster screamed. The children said that the monster would eat them .	Speech indicates when someone is speaking. Direct speech is surrounded by inverted commas (speech marks). Indirect speech is introduced by the word <i>that</i> .
Linking Adverb	3	The monster screamed in the attic. Therefore , the children cried all night.	A linking adverb (e.g. <i>therefore</i> , <i>however</i> , <i>meanwhile</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>nonetheless</i>) links a sentence to the one that came before.
Adverbial Clause	2	The monster screamed because he wanted his teddy . When they heard the noise , the children cried.	An adverbial clause adds an additional idea to a sentence. This idea adds more information about the verb in the main part of the sentence. An adverbial clause can be moved around in a sentence and begins with a subordinating conjunction (a joining word) such as <i>because</i> , <i>although</i> , <i>if</i> , <i>while</i> , <i>when</i> , <i>as</i> .
Non-Finite Clause	4	Waking everyone up , the monster screamed. The children cried all night, terrified by the strange noises .	A non-finite clause adds an additional idea to a sentence. This second idea usually adds more information about the subject of the sentence. It begins with an -ed (<i>terrified</i>) or -ing (<i>waking</i>) verb. It can be moved around in a sentence.
Relative Clause	5	The monster, who was afraid of the dark , screamed. The children hid under the covers, where they trembled with fear .	A relative clause describes the noun that precedes it. It begins with a relative pronoun (<i>that</i> , <i>where</i> , <i>which</i> , <i>who</i> , <i>whose</i>), which is sometimes omitted. A relative clause cannot be moved.

Subject

Green represents the subject of a sentence, and describes who or what the sentence is about.

The boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Several chickens clucked around the yard.

Forests cover parts of Scotland.

The noun (a naming word for a person, place or thing) is the most important word in a subject, for example:

The boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Several chickens clucked around the yard.

That mountain is capped with snow.

These nouns often need a determiner (a word that introduces a noun) before them. Common determiners are:

a an both each every her his many my one our several some
the that these this those three two your

The boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Several chickens clucked around the yard.

That mountain is capped with snow.

We can add an adjective (a word that describe nouns) to the subject to make it more interesting.

The small boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Several brown chickens clucked around the yard.

That tall mountain is capped with snow.

Or more adjectives.

The small, young boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Several curious, brown chickens clucked around the yard.

That tall, jagged mountain is capped with snow.

We can replace everything with a pronoun (a word that replaces a noun).

He ate a huge slice of cake.

They clucked around the yard.

It is capped with snow.

There may be more than one subject in a sentence. These are joined with conjunctions (joining words). The most common conjunction that joins a subject is 'and'.

A small boy and his friend ate a huge slice of cake.

Several curious, brown chickens, some yellow chicks and a proud rooster clucked around the yard.

Predicate

Orange represents the predicate in a sentence, which is the part of a sentence that provides information about the subject: mostly commonly what the subject does.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens clucked around the yard.
That mountain stood in a wide valley.

The most important word in the predicate is the verb (a doing word).

A boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens clucked around the yard.
That mountain stood in a wide valley.

Sometimes the verb is made up of more than one word. A verb made up of more than one word is often called a verb phrase.

A boy had eaten a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens were clucking around the yard.
That mountain is capped with snow.

A predicate may also include an adverb (a word that describes a verb), often by telling the reader *where*, *when* or *how* it happens.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake outside. (where)
A boy ate a huge slice of cake earlier. (when)
A boy ate a huge slice of cake hungrily. (how)

Sometimes the *when*, *where* or *how* is a small group of words. This is called an adverbial phrase.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake in the kitchen. (where)
A boy ate a huge slice of cake last night. (when)
A boy ate a huge slice of cake with delight. (how)

Adverbs and adverbials can be moved to the start of the sentence. When at the front, we call them fronted adverbials. They are often followed by a comma.

In the kitchen, a boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Last night, a boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Hungrily, a boy ate a huge slice of cake.

A sentence might have more than one predicate. Predicates are joined together with conjunctions (joining words) such as: *and, but, or, so, yet*

A boy ate a huge slice of cake so got a tummy ache.

When three or more predicates are joined together, we often use a comma to separate the first two and the conjunction *and* to join the last two.

Several chickens clucked around the yard, hopped over the fence and wandered into the woods.

Stop

Red represents the punctuation that completes (or stops) a sentence.

The most common way of completing a sentence is to use a full stop.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens clucked around the yard.
That mountain is capped with snow.

An exclamation mark completes a sentence that conveys strong emotion or high drama.

That slice of cake is huge!
Those chickens look dangerous!
What beautiful mountains!

And a question mark completes a question.

Did the boy eat that huge slice of cake?
Why did the chickens cluck around the yard?
Is that mountain capped with snow?

main clause (subject + Predicate)

A subject and predicate and are joined together to form a complete idea that makes sense on its own. This is called a main clause.

a boy ate a huge slice of cake
several chickens clucked around the yard
that mountain is capped with snow

A main clause can be a sentence. We can show this by using a capital letter and a stop.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens clucked around the yard.
That mountain is capped with snow.

This is simplest kind of sentence in English. In Rainbow Grammar this pattern is sometimes called a 'traffic light sentence' because it uses the colours of a traffic light. Nearly all sentences in English have this pattern at their heart (although sentences often add other parts too).

We can join two main clauses together with a conjunction (a joining word), such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *yet*.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake but his friend wasn't hungry.
Several chickens clucked around the yard so the chicks followed them.
That mountain is capped with snow and the valleys are filled with trees.

We could even join three main clauses together. We often use a comma to separate the first two clauses and the conjunction *and* to join final two.

The mountain is capped with snow, the valleys are filled with trees and the sky is a crisp, clear blue.

Older children will begin to use semi-colons to join two main clauses.

A boy ate a huge slice of cake; his friend wasn't hungry.
Several chickens clucked around the yard; the chicks followed them.
That mountain is capped with snow; the valleys are filled with trees.

Some types of sentences can be very tricky to colour as English is a very complicated language, so do not be concerned if children cannot colour every sentence that they write (most adults couldn't either). There are two sentence types that can be particularly tricky: commands and questions. Especially questions!

A command, or instruction, is 'bossy sentence' that tells the reader what to do. They seem to have no subject (green).

Eat this slice of cake.
Stop those chickens from clucking!
Climb that mountain.

But in each case there is a hidden subject - the person reading the sentence (you). Because the subject is always 'you' in a command, it need not be written.

~~You~~ *Eat this slice of cake.*
~~You~~ *Stop those chickens from clucking!*
~~You~~ *Climb that mountain.*

Questions are the trickiest of all to understand as their grammar can be quite difficult. Many questions are formed by moving a verb from the predicate and placing it before the subject.

The boy has eaten a huge slice of cake.
becomes
Has the boy eaten a huge slice of cake?

Several chickens were clucking around the yard.
becomes
Were several chickens clucking around the yard?

We could also add a question word (how, what, when, where, which, who, why) . These are not coloured in Rainbow Grammar.

Which boy has eaten a slice of cake?
Why were several chickens clucking around the yard?

Speech

Yellow represents speech, which can either be direct or indirect.

Direct speech tells the reader that somebody is speaking. It is surrounded by speech marks (sometimes also called inverted commas), begins with a capital letter and ends with a comma, full stop, exclamation mark or question mark.

"Can I have a slice of cake?" the boy asked.

"Those chickens are too noisy!" the farmer complained.

"That mountain is beautiful," said the climber.

Sometimes writers use a little speech before saying who is speaking and then carry on with more speech. This is so the reader isn't left wondering who is speaking for too long.

"Can I have a slice of cake?" the boy asked. "I'm so hungry!"

Indirect (or reported) speech tells the reader what somebody said earlier. It is most often introduced by the word *that*.

The boy said that he wanted a slice of cake.

The farmer complained that the chickens were too noisy.

The climber said that the mountain was beautiful.

Linking Adverb

Pink represents linking adverbs. These are special words that link two separate sentences together. Children learn a small selection linking adverbs in Key Stage 2 (although there are many more in English).

also besides consequently finally for example furthermore however in fact instead meanwhile next nonetheless now overall similarly soon still subsequently then therefore

Linking adverbs are often followed by a comma.

The boy ate a huge slice of cake. Then, he ate another.
Several chickens clucked around the yard. Meanwhile, a fox watched hungrily.
The snow-capped mountain looked beautiful. However, avalanches happened regularly.

Adverbial Clause

Dark blue represents an adverbial clause, which adds a second idea to a sentence.

The boy ate a huge slice of cake because he was hungry.

An adverbial clause begins with a conjunction (joining word) which helps it to join onto the rest of the sentence:

after although as as soon as because before by the time even though if in case just as now that once provided that since so that unless until when whenever whereas wherever while

*The boy ate a huge slice of cake because he was hungry.
Several chickens clucked around the yard whenever the farmer fed them.
That mountain is capped with snow even though the weather has been warm.*

An adverbial clause can go at the end of the sentence (as in the above examples) or at the start of the sentence. When placed at the start, the adverbial clause is usually followed by a comma.

*Because he was very hungry, the boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Whenever the farmer fed them, several chickens clucked around the yard.
Even though the weather has been warm, that mountain is capped with snow.*

Older children might begin to experiment with putting the adverbial clause in the middle of the sentence (but this is tricky to do well); when in the middle, a comma is on used either side.

The boy, because he was very hungry, ate a huge slice of cake.

Non-Finite Clause

Light blue represents a non-finite clause. Like the dark blue adverbial clause, it also adds a second idea to a sentence. However, it does not use a conjunction (joining word) to join to the sentence. Instead, it starts with a verb. These verbs will mostly end with –ed (dressed, followed) or –ing (smashing, watching), so sometimes we call non-finite clauses ‘eding’ clauses.

They can be placed at the start of a sentence:

*Stuffing it into his mouth, the boy ate a huge slice of cake.
Followed by their chicks, several chickens clucked around the yard.*

Or at the end:

*The boy ate a huge slice of cake, stuffing it into his mouth.
Several chickens clucked around the yard, followed by their chicks.*

Older children will experiment with placing the non-finite clause in the middle too.

*The boy, stuffing it into his mouth, ate a huge slice of cake.
Several chickens, followed by their chicks, clucked around the yard.*

Wherever it is placed, it is usually separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma (or two if it is in the middle).

Relative Clause

Purple represents a relative clause. The job of a relative clause is to add more information to a noun in a sentence. A relative clause starts with a relative pronoun. Common relative pronouns include:

that where which who whose

The boy, who was very hungry, ate a huge slice of cake.

In the sentence above, the relative clause tells us more about, and so follows, *the boy*.

The boy ate a huge slice of cake, which was covered in chocolate sprinkles.

In this sentence above, the relative clause tells us more about, and so follows, *the cake*.

The relative clause is often separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

A common mistake that many children make is to use the word 'what' when they mean 'that'.

The cake what was in the fridge looked delicious.

should be

The cake that was in the fridge looked delicious.

Rainbow Sentences

A rainbow sentence is one that uses several Rainbow Grammar colours at the same time.

Peering into the fridge, Tim, who was still hungry, grabbed the cake even though he had just had dinner.

Then, just as Tim took his first bite, mum walked into the kitchen and, frowning her brow, looked crossly at him.

"Put that back!" she shouted, pointing at the cake, which had a Tim-sized bite missing. "That's for gran's birthday!"

Hidden inside each sentence is a simple traffic light sentence that contains the main idea.

Tim grabbed the cake.

Mum walked into the kitchen and looked crossly at him.

She shouted.

And, even though children will build ever more complicated sentences as they get older and more confident with their writing, we still want them to keep using simple sentences too.

Tim froze!