

## REVISION OF BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Let's start with some definitions:

A **phrase** is a group of words; example: *'the West Ham defence'*

A **sentence** is a stand-alone phrase that usually gives complete information and usually includes at least a **noun** and a **verb** (which we'll look at later); example: *'The West Ham defence failed.'*

A **clause** is a phrase that forms part of a sentence; in general terms, a **main clause** usually gives complete information, while a **subordinate clause** usually gives additional but incomplete information; example: *'Because they were not paying attention, the West Ham defence failed to stop the ball being crossed into the area.'*

We can identify the two clauses in the sentence above by looking at them separately: The first phrase, *'Because they were not paying attention'*, does not give the complete picture – more information is needed. It is therefore a **subordinate clause**. The second phrase, *'the West Ham defence failed to stop the ball being crossed into the area'*, gives complete information and is therefore the **main clause**.

Notice that a **comma** separates the main clause from the subordinate clause. This is frequently the case. Sometimes the subordinate clause follows the main clause. There may be more than one of these in a sentence; example: *'Because they were not paying attention, the West Ham defence failed to stop the ball being crossed into the area, which their manager found extremely frustrating.'* The arrangement in this sentence is: **subordinate** clause, **main** clause, **subordinate** clause.

Remember: a **main clause** can be a sentence on its own. A **subordinate clause** can't.

A **syllable** is a part of a word having its own sound; examples: 'ball' is a single-syllable word; 'defence' is a two-syllable word (de-fence); 'manager' is a three-syllable word (man-a-ger).

A **noun** is a thing. It can be real (example: 'ball') or imaginary (example: 'attention'). A **proper noun** is a name (example: 'West Ham'). The first letter in a proper noun is always a **capital** letter.

A **verb** is a doing word. Example: 'He crosses the ball into the area'. In this sentence 'crosses' is the verb and it is in the **present tense** (he's doing it now). We could write: 'He crossed the ball into the area', which is the **past tense** (he's already done it) or 'He will cross the ball into the area', which is the **future** tense.

The **subject** of a sentence or clause is the thing doing the verb action. The **object** is the thing receiving the verb action. In the sentence above, 'He' is the subject and 'ball' is the object.

An **adjective** is a word describing a noun. Example: *'When the defender slipped on the wet grass, the winger ran past him and immediately crossed the ball into the area'*. In this sentence, 'wet' is the adjective.

An **adverb** is a word giving more information about the verb. In the sentence above, 'immediately' is the adverb.

A **conjunction** is a word joining two or more main clauses to form a longer sentence. Examples: and, but, so. *'The manager changed the formation **but** the defence was still weak **so** he brought on a substitute **and** soon afterwards the situation began to improve'*.

The best way to improve your literacy is by **PRACTICE**. Practise reading silently, reading aloud (which will improve your speech) and writing. You can write articles or poems or stories. Also word puzzles such as crosswords will improve your vocabulary and, an extra bonus, enhance your powers of logic and reasoning.

And finally: did you notice the Asbo-word in the last paragraph? Look at practice/practise. As a noun it is spelt with a 'c' and as a verb with an 's'. Why the difference? Who knows? Is it important to spell it correctly? It shouldn't matter, but it does, because people judge others by their standards of literacy. So, as we've said before, improve your literacy and you will improve the impression you make on other people.