

ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR

by David Crystal

The **Essential Grammar** covers the areas of English grammar which most often cause problems for intermediate learners. It has been based on students' needs and analysis of the Longman Learner's Corpus, with natural real-life example sentences taken from the British National Corpus. It provides practical help for students who want to put their grammar to active use when writing or speaking in English.

Contents

- | | |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| Section 1 | Statements and questions |
| Section 2 | Verbs: intransitive and transitive |
| Section 3 | Talking about the present |
| Section 4 | Talking about the past |
| Section 5 | Talking about the future |
| Section 6 | Phrasal verbs |
| Section 7 | Modal verbs |
| Section 8 | Conditionals |
| Section 9 | Active and passive |
| Section 10 | Nouns: countable and uncountable |
| Section 11 | Nouns: singular and plural |
| Section 12 | Determiners and articles |
| Section 13 | Word order |
| Section 14 | Comparison |
| Section 15 | Reported speech |

1 Statements and questions

STATEMENTS

A 'statement' is a sentence which gives information. If you make a statement, you usually give the sentence a subject, and this must go in front of the verb.

The children are playing in the garden.

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Negative statements are made in two main ways:

1. If the statement contains an auxiliary verb, such as **is** or **have**, you usually add **not** in its contracted form **n't**.

She is not leaving. OR She isn't leaving.

Am and **may** do not allow **n't**. **Will**, **shall**, and **can** have special contracted forms: **won't**, **shan't**, **can't**.

The same rules apply when you make a question negative.

Are they in the garden? Aren't they in the garden?

Will he get the job? Won't he get the job?

2. If the statement has no auxiliary verb, you need to make the negative using a form of **do** + **not/n't**. Make sure that the main verb is in its basic form.

She likes swimming. She doesn't like swimming. NOT She doesn't likes swimming.

I saw a ship. I didn't see a ship. NOT I didn't saw a ship.

QUESTIONS

Questions are sentences which ask for information. They fall into three main types, depending on the kind of reply they expect.

'**Yes-no questions**' expect a simple **yes** or **no** reply (or a word or phrase which can be used instead of **yes** or **no**). In these cases, you change the order of subject and verb.

Will Jane resign? (Possible answers: yes, no, don't know, probably, maybe etc)

Are they ready?

'**Wh-questions**' begin with a question word, such as **what**, **why**, **where**, or **how**. This kind of question can have a wide range of different replies. The answer may be a full sentence, or one which leaves out the words that you can guess from knowing the question. Here too, you need to change the order of subject and verb.

Where are you going? (Possible answers: I'm going to work, downstairs, the library etc)

'**Alternative questions**' give the listener a choice of two possible replies, both of which are mentioned in the question. The two possibilities are connected by the word **or**. Once again, you must change the order of subject and verb.

Will you travel by train or by boat? (Possible answers: by train, by boat, don't know etc)

Tag questions

You can change a statement into a question by adding a 'tag question' at the end of it. When you use a tag question, you are asking the listener to agree with the statement you have just made. If you make the statement positive, you expect the answer **yes**. If you make it negative, you expect the answer **no**.

A tag question is a type of 'yes-no question', and shows the same change of word order. You use the same personal pronoun (**she**, **they** etc) and tense of the verb as in the statement to which the tag question is joined. In the most common kind of tag question, you change from positive to negative, or from negative to positive.

She's outside, isn't she? (Expected answer: yes)

They were ready, weren't they? (Expected answer: yes)

You aren't going, are you? (Expected answer: no)

It isn't difficult, is it? (Expected answer: no)

2: Verbs: intransitive and transitive

Questions which are not questions

You can also use a sentence which looks like a question, but it is one where you are not actually expecting any reply. Because these sentences are halfway between a question and an exclamation, you will find them sometimes written with a question-mark and sometimes with an exclamation-mark.

In some cases, you already know the answer or you are asking your listener to agree with you. These sentences are called 'exclamatory questions'.

Hasn't she grown!

Wasn't the book marvellous?

In other cases, no answer is possible. (Of course your listener may still give you an answer, whether you like it or not!) These sentences are used when you want to express a strong feeling about something. They are called 'rhetorical questions'.

Doesn't everyone know that the whole thing is impossible?

Polite questions

You can make a question sound more polite by using **please** and by using phrases such as **could I...?** or **may I...?** For more information about this kind of question, go to REQUESTS in the ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION section.

Verbs: intransitive and transitive

Most verbs in English belong to either of two types: intransitive verbs or transitive verbs.

INTRANSITIVE VERBS

An intransitive verb does not have an object. You can use it without having to add any more words to the sentence. Here are some examples of intransitive verbs:

Something's happening.

I'll wait.

It doesn't matter.

You can add other words to these sentences in order to show meanings such as time, place, or manner, but these words do not have to be there for the sentence to make sense.

Something's happening in the street.

I'll wait for a few minutes.

It doesn't matter at all.

Other intransitive verbs include **appear**, **come**, **go**, **smile**, **lie**, and **rise**.

Intransitive verbs cannot be used in the passive.

 Don't say 'it was happened' or 'they were died'. Say **it happened** or **they died**.

In this dictionary, intransitive verbs are shown like this: [v I].

TRANSITIVE VERBS

A transitive verb must have an object. Without the object, the sentence does not make sense. The object of the verb is usually a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun. Here are some examples of transitive verbs:

She bought that dress in Tokyo. NOT She bought in Tokyo.

Did you find the key? NOT Did you find?

I really like him. NOT I really like.

Sometimes the object is a clause which begins with **(that)**. For example:

I wish she would stop smoking. OR I wish that she would stop smoking.

2: Verbs: intransitive and transitive

Sometimes the object is a whole sentence. For example:

"It's time to go home," he said.

Other transitive verbs include **make, use, need, thank, enjoy, keep,** and **carry.**

In this dictionary, transitive verbs are shown like this: [v T].

VERBS THAT CAN BE TRANSITIVE OR INTRANSITIVE

Several verbs can be used in a transitive or intransitive way. Here are some examples of verbs that can be transitive or intransitive:

There's no need to shout. [v I]

Someone shouted my name. [v T]

Where do you want to meet? [v I]

I'll meet you outside the school. [v T]

I'm sorry. I don't understand. [v I]

She didn't understand his explanation. [v T]

The intransitive uses are very similar to the transitive ones, except that the object has been left out.

In this dictionary, these verbs are shown like this: [v I/T].

OTHER VERBS

Some verbs can be followed by an adjective or adjective phrase. Here are some examples of these verbs:

You seem tired.

It all sounds very interesting.

Was he angry?

In this dictionary, these verbs are shown like this: [v].

3 Talking about the present

English has two main ways of talking about present time: the simple present and the present progressive.

THE SIMPLE PRESENT

You make the simple present by using the verb in its basic form. You add **-s** or **-es** to the verb in the third person singular.

The simple present is used in the following ways:

1. You use the simple present to talk about something which is happening now, and which will continue to happen in the future. You often use the simple present in this meaning to talk about things that are true about your life, for example where you live, your job, or the kinds of things you like.

Martin lives in Canada.

I work in a hospital.

"What kind of books do you read?" "I mostly read science fiction."

2. You use the simple present when you talk about something which happens again and again, or say that something happens regularly at a particular time. Use words such as **always, often, sometimes, occasionally, and never,** or phrases such as **on Tuesdays** or **every day** with the simple present in this meaning.

They often go out to restaurants.

I travel to London twice a month.

He gets up at 6 o'clock.

She goes to church every Sunday.

3: Talking about the present

3. You use the simple present to talk about something which stays the same for ever – such as a scientific fact.

Oil floats on water.

Two and two make four.

4. You use the simple present when you are describing what is happening at the exact moment when you are speaking. This meaning of the simple present is used for example in sports commentaries.

Shearer gets the ball from Gascoigne. He shoots - and scores!

⚠ For descriptions of actions that are happening now, you usually use the present progressive (see below), rather than the present simple. For example:

"What are you doing?" "I'm making a poster." NOT "What do you do?" "I make a poster."

THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

You make the present progressive by using a form of the verb **be** in the present tense, followed by the main verb with an **-ing** ending, for example **I am waiting, she is coming.**

The present progressive is used in the following ways:

1. You use the present progressive to talk about something which is happening now at the time you are speaking or writing. You often use this meaning with words and phrases that express present time, such as **now, at the moment,** and **currently.**

"What's Bob doing?" "He's watching television."

It's raining again.

I'm looking for my glasses.

2. You use the present progressive to say that something is happening now, but will only continue for a limited period of time. Compare these pairs of sentences:

We live in France. (=France is our permanent home)

We're living in France. (=we are living there for a limited period of time)

He cooks his own meals. (=he always does it)

He's cooking his own meals. (=he does not usually do it)

If you want to talk about the subjects you are studying at school or university, you usually use the present progressive.

She's studying law at Harvard. NOT She studies law at Harvard.

I'm studying English. NOT I study English.

Verbs that cannot be used in the progressive

Verbs which express a situation or process, rather than describing a definite action, are not usually used in the progressive. Do not use the progressive with the following verbs:

be	have	see
believe	like	agree
know	love	disagree
recognize	hate	mean
remember	prefer	need
understand	want	deserve
wish	belong	

I know the answer. NOT I am knowing the answer.

She understands me. NOT She is understanding me.

4 Talking about the past

There are several ways of talking about actions that happened in the past. These include the simple past, the past progressive, the present perfect, the past perfect, and the phrase **used to**.

THE SIMPLE PAST

You usually make the simple past by adding **-ed** to the end of the verb. For example:

I walk → *I walked*
we wait → *we waited*
they jump → *they jumped*

Many common verbs have irregular simple past forms, and so you have to use a special ending, or change the verb in some other way. For example:

I go → *I went*
we buy → *we bought*
they see → *they saw*

You use the simple past to talk about an action which happened and finished in the past. There is a space between the time when the action happened, and the time when you are speaking or writing about it.

He kicked the ball into the net.
I went home early because I had a headache.
The police found a dead body in the river.

You often use words or phrases such as **at midnight**, **on Tuesday**, **in 1992**, **yesterday**, and **last year** with the simple past, to draw attention to the time when something happened. For example:

Our visitors arrived yesterday.
Where did you go last week?
The war ended in 1945.

THE PAST PROGRESSIVE

You make the past progressive by using **was** or **were**, followed by the main verb with an **-ing** ending, for example **I was looking**, **they were laughing**.

The past progressive is used in the following ways:

1. You use the past progressive when you want to talk about something that happened in the past, and continued to happen for only a limited period of time.

We were living in France at that time.
I was trying to get the waiter's attention.
The man was looking at me in a very strange way.

2. You use the past progressive to talk about something which continued to happen for a period of time, during which another thing happened.

I was watching TV when the phone rang.
They met each other while they were staying in London.

⚠ Some verbs are not usually used in the progressive. Don't say, 'I was not believing him'. Say **I did not believe him**. See section **3** for a list of these verbs.

THE PRESENT PERFECT

You make the present perfect by using **has** or **have**, followed by the 'past participle' form of the main verb, for example **I have walked**, **she has gone**, **they have seen**.

The present perfect is used in the following ways:

1. You use the present perfect to talk about something that happened in the past and is finished, but which still affects the situation now.

Someone has broken the window. (RESULT NOW: it is still broken, and needs to be mended)

The taxi has arrived. (RESULT NOW: someone needs to go and get into the taxi)

Jane's hurt her hand, so she can't write. (RESULT NOW: Jane can't write)

You often use **just** and **recently** with the present perfect in this meaning.

Jane's just left, but you might catch her in the car park.

In American English, people often use the simple past instead of the present perfect in this sense.

British English	American English
<i>I've just seen Carol.</i>	<i>I just saw Carol.</i>
<i>You've already told me that.</i>	<i>You already told me that.</i>
<i>Have they come home yet?</i>	<i>Did they come home yet?</i>

2. You use the present perfect to say that something started to happen in the past, and has continued to happen up to now. There is a clear difference with the past tense, which you use when the action is finished. Compare these sentences:

present perfect: *I have lived in Chicago for many years.* (=I still live there now)

simple past: *I lived in Chicago for many years.* (=now I live somewhere else)

present perfect: *Jim has worked for us since 1992.* (=he still works for us now)

simple past: *Jim worked for us from 1992 to 1996.* (=he does not work for us any more)

⚠ Don't say 'I am living here for 10 years', or 'I live here for 10 years'. Say **I have lived here for 10 years**.

3. You use the present perfect to talk about something that happened at some time in the past before now, but it is not important to say when it happened.

She has had several jobs abroad.
There have been problems with this system in the past.

This meaning of the present perfect is often used in news reports.

There has been a big earthquake in Japan, and hundreds of people have been killed.

You can emphasize this meaning by using **ever** in questions, or **never** in negative sentences. For example:

Have you ever visited Scotland?
I've never been in a plane before.

If you give the date, year, or time when something happened, you must use the simple past, not the present perfect. For example:

I spoke to him yesterday. **NOT** *I have spoken to him yesterday.*
They arrived in the US last week. **NOT** *They have arrived in the US last week.*

THE PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

You make the present perfect progressive by using **have been/has been**, followed by the main verb with an **-ing** ending, for example **I have been living**, **she has been studying**. The present perfect progressive has very similar meanings to the present perfect, but draws attention to the period of time during which the action has taken place.

The present perfect progressive is used in the following ways:

1. You use the present perfect progressive to talk about something which has continued to happen for a period of time in the past, and which may still be happening now.

How long have you been learning English?
We've been expecting them to arrive since last Thursday.

2. You use the present progressive to talk about something which has been taking place recently and which affects the situation now.

"You look tired." "I've been working really hard."
It's been raining all week, so the ground's very wet.

4: Talking about the past

⚠ Some verbs are not usually used in the progressive. Don't say 'I've been knowing John for a long time'. Say **I have known John for a long time**. See section 3 for a list of these verbs.

THE PAST PERFECT

If you want to talk about a past action which took place before another past action, you can use **had**, followed by the past participle of the main verb.

*After the visitors had left, we watched TV.
They told me that the taxi had already arrived.*

You can also use the past perfect in a 'progressive' form by using **had been**, and putting it in front of a main verb with an **-ing** ending.

We had only been driving for an hour when the car ran out of petrol.

Using the right time phrases with the past tense

If you use words or phrases about time with the simple past, they must have a meaning which shows there has been a space between the time when the action or event happened and the time when you are talking or writing about it. For example:

I saw John yesterday/a week ago/last Tuesday.

If you use other words or phrases about time with the present perfect, they must have a meaning which shows that the action has continued up to the present, and may still be going on. For example:

I haven't seen John since Monday/so far/yet.

⚠ Don't say 'I've seen him a week ago' or 'I didn't see John since Monday'.

USED TO

You use **used to** when you want to say that something happened in the past over a period of time, but it no longer happens now. It is found only in the past tense. You use **used to** with the basic form of the main verb, for example **used to smoke**, **used to live**, **used to be**.

*I used to play football a lot when I was at school.
She used to smoke 40 cigarettes a day.
The club used to be very fashionable.
They used to live in Los Angeles.*

In negatives, you say **didn't use to**, or **used not to**.

I didn't use to like spicy food. OR I used not to like spicy food.

In questions, you say **did (you/she/John etc) use to ... ?**.

*Did you use to smoke?
What did she use to call him?*

5 Talking about the future

There are several ways of talking about the future in English.

THE FUTURE WITH 'WILL'

You put the verb **will** in front of the main verb. This is the most common way of expressing future time. The short form of **will** is 'll and the short form of **will not** is **won't**. You usually use these in spoken English instead of **will** or **will not**. The main verb can be either in its 'simple' form or in its 'progressive' form. For example:

*I will talk to them.
We'll have a break at six o'clock.
I'll talk to them.*

*He'll be arriving later.
Don't worry - I won't break it.*

You use **will** in this meaning in sentences that begin **I'm sure, I think, I expect, I suppose, I doubt** etc, or with words such as **probably, perhaps, certainly** etc.

*"Do you think Carla will pass her test?" "Yes, I'm sure she will."
I expect I'll see him again soon.
They say it'll probably snow tomorrow.
Perhaps things will be better next week.*

THE FUTURE WITH 'SHALL'

In British English, you often use **shall** in questions when making suggestions about what to do, or when discussing what to do. This use is rare in American English.

*Shall we go now?
What shall I tell Mike?*

In formal British English, you can sometimes hear **I shall** used to express future time.

I shall try to persuade them.

This is very rare in American English.

THE FUTURE WITH 'BE GOING TO'

You use a form of **be going to** to say that something will happen soon.

*It's going to rain.
Watch out - you're going to hit that tree!
I think I'm going to be sick.*

You also use a form of **be going to** to talk about someone's intentions, or what they have decided to do.

*I'm going to ask for my money back.
Lucy is going to travel round the world when she leaves school.*

THE FUTURE WITH 'BE ABOUT TO'

You use **be about to** to say that something will happen almost immediately.

*Take your seats, please. The show is about to begin.
I was about to go out when the phone rang.*

THE FUTURE WITH THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

You use the present progressive (**he's leaving, they're starting** etc) with a word or phrase expressing future time to talk about something that will happen because you have planned or arranged it.

*We're leaving on Saturday morning.
I'm having a party next week - do you want to come?*

THE FUTURE WITH THE SIMPLE PRESENT

You use the simple present (**it starts, we arrive** etc) with a word or phrase expressing future time, to say that something will definitely happen at a particular time, especially because it has been officially arranged.

*The next plane to Los Angeles leaves at 6:25.
The meeting is on Thursday.
What time does the show start?*

You use the simple present in subordinate clauses to talk about the future, for example in clauses that begin with **when, if, unless, before, after, and as soon as**. Don't use **will** in this kind of clause.

*I'll call you when I get back. NOT I'll call you when I will get back.
If the bus leaves now, it will get there by 6. NOT If the bus will leave now,
it will get there by 6.*

WHAT IS A PHRASAL VERB?

A phrasal verb is a verb which consists of more than one word. Most phrasal verbs consist of two words: the first word is a verb, the second word is a preposition or an adverb. Examples of common phrasal verbs are **get up**, **put off**, **turn on**, **object to**, and **apply for**. There are also some three-word phrasal verbs, such as **look forward to** and **get away with**.

You can sometimes guess the meaning of a phrasal verb from the meaning of the words it contains, for example **come in** = come + in. More often, the meaning of the phrasal verb is different - often very different - from the meaning of the verb which forms its first part.

For example **put off** (=arrange to do something at a later time) has a very different meaning from **put** (=put something somewhere), and **look forward to** (=when you feel happy because something is going to happen soon) has a very different meaning from **look** (=look at something).

Like single-word verbs, some phrasal verbs are 'transitive' (they must have an object), and some phrasal verbs are 'intransitive' (they do not have an object). In this dictionary, transitive phrasal verbs are shown as [*phrasal verb* T], and intransitive phrasal verbs are shown as [*phrasal verb* I]. For example:

take off [*phrasal verb* T] (=remove your shirt, coat etc)

She took off her coat and sat down.

get up [*phrasal verb* I] (=leave your bed in the morning)

I usually get up very early.

Some phrasal verbs can be transitive or intransitive. In this dictionary, this kind of phrasal verb is shown as [*phrasal verb* I/T]. For example:

join in [*phrasal verb* I/T] (=start taking part in something that other people are already doing, for example a game or song)

We all joined in the game.

I want you all to join in.

WHERE DO YOU PUT THE OBJECT?

With transitive phrasal verbs, you have to decide where to put the object.

■ If the phrasal verb ends with a preposition, the preposition must come after the verb, and you cannot split up the phrasal verb. For example:

apply for sth (=ask to be considered for a job)

I've applied for a job at the university.

object to sth (=say that you do not agree with something)

Local people are objecting to the plan.

In this dictionary, this kind of phrasal verb is shown with 'sth' or 'sb' at the end, to show you that you cannot split up the phrasal verb and the object must come after the phrasal verb.

■ If the phrasal verb ends with an adverb, there are three possibilities.

1. If you choose a noun phrase as the object, you can put it either before or after the adverb. For example:

call off (=decide that a meeting, party, strike etc should not happen)

They've called off the strike. OR They've called the strike off.

turn on (=make a light, television, radio etc start working)

Will you turn on the light? OR Will you turn the light on?

2. If you choose a pronoun (**him**, **her**, **it**, **them** etc) as the object, you have to put it before the adverb. For example:

turn down (=make a television, radio etc less loud)

Can you turn it down? NOT Can you turn down it?

3. If the object is a long phrase, you usually put it at the end after the phrasal verb. For example:

They've called off the strike that was planned for next week.

Can you turn down the television in the front room?

This dictionary tells you how to move the object with this kind of phrasal verb. Here is an example of the kind of information it gives you:

try on [*phrasal verb* T] to put on a piece of clothing, to see if it fits you and looks nice on you

try sth on *If you like the shoes, why don't you try them on?*

try on sth *I tried on a beautiful coat, but it was too big.*

7 Modal verbs

The main 'modal verbs' (or 'modals') are:

can	may	will	shall	must
could	might	would	should	

Ought to, **used to**, **dare** and **need** are also used as modal verbs, but they have other uses as well.

WHEN TO USE MODAL VERBS

Modals have several meanings, so you need to think about the meaning of the sentence as a whole to be sure that your choice of modal expresses exactly what you want to say. The main ideas that modals are used to express are shown in the following sections.

Permission

(=allowing someone to do something)

If you want to give or ask for permission, use **can** or **may**. **May** is more polite or formal than **can**.

You can leave when the bell rings.

Customers may purchase extra copies at half price.

Could is a polite way of asking for permission.

Could I leave early today?

Might is a very formal and old-fashioned way of asking for permission.

Might I borrow your umbrella?

➔ see also **LET** and **PERMISSION**

Obligation

(=saying what someone must do)

If you want to demand that something happens, or that someone does something (=to express obligation), use **must**. You can also use this idea about yourself, in order to express a sense of duty.

The builders must finish the job today.

We mustn't leave the house before 6 o'clock.

I must remember to bring my notebook.

➔ see also **MUST**

Intention

(=saying what you are going to do)

If you want to say that you intend to do something, use **will** or **shall**. You can emphasize the meaning of intention if you say the modal louder than the surrounding words.

Shall is only used with the first person (I or we), and is much less common than will. It is hardly ever used in American English.

*This letter says they will definitely give us our money back.
I shan't stay long.*

To express an intention at a time in the past, use **would**.

I tried to explain, but nobody would listen.

Use **would** if there are conditions controlling whether something will take place.

I would leave tomorrow, if I had the money.

➔ see also **INTEND**

Ability

(=saying whether you are able to do something)

If you want to say whether someone is able to carry out an action, use **can**.

*Guy can speak Russian.
Can you remember her name?
I can't find my shoes!*

When you put these sentences into the past tense, use **could**.

He was late for school because he couldn't find his bag.

Use **could** if there are conditions controlling whether the event will take place.

I could leave tomorrow, if I had the money.

➔ see also **CAN**

Possibility

(=saying whether something is possible)

If you want to say that something is possible, use **can** or **may**. **May** is more polite or formal than **can**.

*You can go by bus from London to Liverpool.
You may find the manager is still there, if you go to the office now.*

If you want to suggest that the action is less likely to happen, use **could** or **might**. If you use **might**, you mean that the action is especially unlikely.

*We could go by bus.
We might go by bus. (=it is possible, but only if there are no problems)*

➔ see also **POSSIBLE**

Probability

(=saying whether something is likely)

If you want to suggest that an event is likely to happen, use **should** or **ought to**. It will probably take place, but you are not completely sure.

*They should have had our reply by now.
If you take these tablets, you should be all right.
We ought to be there by 6 o'clock.*

➔ see also **PROBABLY, SURE/NOT SURE**

Desirability

(=saying that something is the right thing to do)

If you want to say that you think it is a good thing for something to happen, use **should** or **ought to**. If you think that it is a bad thing for something to happen, put these verbs into the negative.

*You should get the early flight, if you want to be in good time.
You ought to see the doctor as soon as possible.*

*You shouldn't say things like that.
You oughtn't to have left the engine running.*

➔ see also **SHOULD**

Necessity

(=saying that something is necessary)

If you want to say that it is necessary for something to happen, use **must**.

*We really must go now.
I must get my hair cut this weekend.*

If you want to express the opposite meaning (=it is unnecessary for something to happen) use **needn't/need not** or **not need to**.

There's plenty of time so you needn't worry.

⚠ Don't use **mustn't** because this gives the meaning of obligation. (see **Obligation** above)

➔ see also **NEED**

Certainty

(=saying that you are sure about something)

If you want to say that you are sure something is true, use **must**.

*You must be tired, after all your hard work.
They must have left by now.*

To express the opposite meaning (=you are sure something is not true) use **can't**.

*You can't be that tired - you've only been working for an hour!
They can't have left yet.*

➔ see also **SURE/NOT SURE**

Prediction

(=saying what you think is going to happen)

If you want to say that something is certain to happen, use either **will** or **shall**. As with the other uses of these words, **shall** tends to be found only with the first person (I or we), and is much less common than **will**. **Shall** is very rare in American English.

*The cars will be there on time, I promise.
There is no doubt that we shall win.*

➔ see also **SURE/NOT SURE**

HOW TO USE MODAL VERBS

■ Modal verbs are used with the basic form of the verb (=the infinitive form, without 'to').

*You must pay now. NOT You must to pay now.
They can go home if they want. NOT They can to go home if they want.*

■ Modal verbs do not have an -s ending in the present tense of the third person singular.

He can speak French. NOT He cans speak French.

■ Modal verbs do not use **do** in questions or negatives.

*Can you remember her name? NOT Do you can remember her name?
We must not be late. NOT We don't must be late.
Should we lock the door? NOT Do we should lock the door?*

■ Modal verbs do not have an infinitive, a past participle, or a present participle.

8: Conditionals

- In spoken English, you often use short forms when you use the modal verb in the negative.

cannot	→	can't
could not	→	couldn't
will not	→	won't
must not	→	mustn't
shall not	→	shan't
might not	→	mighn't
would not	→	wouldn't
should not	→	shouldn't
ought not	→	oughtn't

⚠ **Mustn't, shan't, mighn't, and oughtn't** are normal in British English, but American speakers usually say **must not, shall not, might not, and ought not**.

8 Conditionals

When you want to say that one situation (described in the main clause) depends on another situation, you use a conditional clause. Conditional clauses usually begin with **if** or (for negative clauses) **unless**.

Jane will pass the exam if she works hard.

Jane will not pass the exam unless she works hard.

They may follow or go in front of the main clause.

If Jane works hard, she will pass her exam.

Conditional clauses are used in two main ways:

- If you see the situation as a real one, and likely to happen, you use the present simple tense in the conditional clause and **will ('ll)** or **won't** in the main clause. Don't use **will** in the conditional clause.

If you take a taxi, you will be there in good time. **NOT** *If you will take a taxi...*
If you wear a coat, you won't get cold. **NOT** *If you will wear a coat...*

- If you see the situation as unreal, imaginary, or less likely to happen, you use the simple past tense in the conditional clause and **would ('d)**, **might**, or **could** in the main clause. Don't use **would** in the conditional clause.

If you saw a ghost, what would you do? **NOT** *If you would see a ghost...*
If I bought a new coat, I might not feel so cold. (=I would possibly not feel so cold)
If I found their address, I could write to them. (=I would be able to write to them)

In sentences of this kind, the past tense of the verb **be** appears as **were** after the first and third persons, in formal speech and writing. Only use **was** in informal speech.

If I were at home, I would be watching television. (informal: *If I was at home...*)
If John were playing today, we'd have a chance of winning. (informal: *If John was playing...*)

- If you want to talk about conditional situations in the past, use **had ('d)** in the conditional clause, and **would have** in the main clause.

If I'd seen her, I would have asked her to call. (=I did not see her)
The books wouldn't have been damaged if Mary had moved them. (=Mary didn't move them)

- You can use **when** instead of **if** in sentences of the first type (present simple + **will** etc.) but not with those of the second (simple past + **would** etc.). **When** is not used in situations that are unlikely or impossible.

What will John do if he goes home? (=John is probably going home)
OR *What will John do when he goes home?* (=John is definitely going home)
What would John do if he went home? (=John is probably not going home)
NOT *What would John do when he went home?*

I would shout if I saw a ghost. **NOT** *I would shout when I saw a ghost.*

9: Active and passive

I wish

If you want to talk about a situation in the present which you are not happy about, and would like to change, use the simple past tense in the conditional clause.

I wish I had a new bike. (=unfortunately, I don't have a new bike)

If you want to talk about a situation in the past which you are not happy about, and would like to change, use **had** in the conditional clause.

I wish I'd gone by train. (=unfortunately, I didn't go by train)
I wish I hadn't gone by train. (=unfortunately, I did go by train)

9 Active and passive

In the sentence *The dog chased the cat*, the verb (*chased*) is active. If you turn it around, and say *The cat was chased by the dog*, the verb (*was chased*) is passive. You form the passive by using the verb **be** and the past participle of the main verb. For example, the passive of **attack** is **be attacked**, the passive of **pay** is **be paid**, and the passive of **see** is **be seen**. You can only use the passive with transitive verbs (see section 2).

WHEN TO USE AN ACTIVE VERB

You use an active verb when you want to say that the subject of a sentence does something. For example:

She opened the window.

WHEN TO USE A PASSIVE VERB

You use a passive verb when you want to say that something happens to the subject of the sentence. For example:

President Kennedy was killed in 1963.

You often use a passive verb when talking about the history of something. For example:

The bridge was built in the 19th century.
The company was established in 1826.

In these cases, it is much more natural to use the passive than to find a vague, active way of expressing the sentence (such as *Someone built this bridge in the 19th century.*).

You often use a passive verb when you are writing about science, or when you are saying how things are made. For example:

Hydrogen and oxygen can be easily mixed in this way.
Paper is made from wood.

If you used an active verb here, you would have to say who does the action – information which is not known or not important.

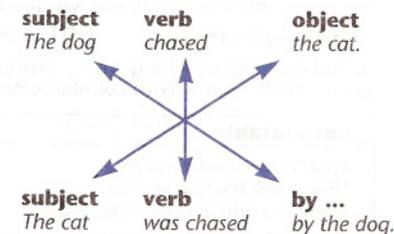
If you want to say who does the action of the verb in a passive sentence, use **by** and then say who does it.

President Kennedy was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963.
The bridge was designed by Brunel.

HOW TO CHANGE AN ACTIVE SENTENCE INTO A PASSIVE ONE

There are three things you need to do in order to change an active sentence into a passive one.

- Move the subject of the active verb to the end of the sentence, and put **by** in front of it.
- Move the object of the active verb to the front of the sentence, so that it becomes the passive subject.



10: Nouns: countable and uncountable

3. Change the verb from active to passive. You do this by adding a form of the auxiliary verb **be** and the past participle of the main verb (see section 4).

THE PASSIVE WITH 'GET'

You can also make a passive using **get** instead of **be**. This kind of passive is very common in conversation. Do not use it in formal writing. You often use this kind of passive to say that something happened suddenly to someone.

I got sacked by my firm. OR *I was sacked by my firm.*
He got hit by a car. OR *He was hit by a car.*

You can also use the passive with **get** when you want to suggest that an action is more forceful or more important to you.

I get paid on Thursday. OR *I am paid on Thursday.*
We often get asked this question. OR *We are often asked this question.*

10 Nouns: countable and uncountable

COUNTABLE NOUNS

A noun is 'countable' if you can think of it as one of several separate units, for example **book**, **egg**, or **horse**. As the name suggests, countable nouns can actually be counted. In this dictionary, countable nouns are shown like this: [n C].

UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

A noun is 'uncountable' if you cannot think of it as one of several separate units, but only as a single idea or substance, for example **butter**, **music**, or **advice**. These nouns are sometimes called 'mass' nouns. They cannot be counted. In this dictionary, uncountable nouns are shown like this: [n U].

GRAMMATICAL DIFFERENCES

There are some important grammatical differences in the way you use countable and uncountable nouns.

1. You can use a countable noun in the singular or in the plural, for example **book/books**, **egg/eggs**, **horse/horses**, **ticket/tickets**, **university/universities**. Don't try to use uncountable nouns in the plural. Don't say **butters**, **musics**, **advices**, **informations**, **furnitures**. It is a common mistake to use an uncountable noun in the plural.

You should listen to his advice. NOT *You should listen to his advices.*

2. You can use a countable noun with **a** or **an**: for example **a book**, **an egg**, **a horse**, **a ticket**, **a university**. Don't use **a** or **an** with uncountable nouns. Don't say **a butter**, **a music**, **an advice**, **an information**, **a furniture**. It is a common mistake to use **a** or **an** with an uncountable noun.

I like listening to music. NOT *I like listening to a music.*

3. You can use an uncountable noun with quantity words such as **some** and **any**: **some butter**, **any music**. If you want to use these words with countable nouns, you must put the nouns into the plural, and say **some tickets**, **any eggs**.

She bought some books. NOT *She bought some book.*

4. You can only use the quantity expressions **much**, **how much**, or **a little** with uncountable nouns. With countable nouns, you have to use **many**, **how many**, or **a few**.

uncountable	countable
<i>I don't have much money.</i>	<i>He doesn't have many friends.</i>
<i>How much time do you have?</i>	<i>How many records do you have?</i>
<i>There is a little butter in the fridge.</i>	<i>There are a few rooms still available.</i>

11: Nouns: singular and plural

5. You can use an uncountable noun on its own without such words as **the**, **some**, or **any**.

She doesn't eat meat.

If you need advice, don't be afraid to ask.

You cannot use a countable noun in the singular in this way – only in the plural.

I like reading books. NOT *I like reading book.*

Computers are always causing problems. NOT *Computers are always causing problem.*

NOUNS WHICH CAN BE COUNTABLE OR UNCOUNTABLE

You can use some nouns in either a countable or an uncountable way, depending on their meaning. The following pairs of sentences show how the meaning can change: in each case there is a countable noun in the first sentence, and an uncountable noun in the second.

Would you like a cake? (=one of several cakes which someone can take to eat)

Do you like chocolate cake? (=a type of food)

The lambs were born early this year. (=the animals)

There are several ways of cooking lamb. (=a type of meat)

Most abstract nouns, such as **love**, **anger**, **knowledge**, **intelligence**, or **freedom**, are always uncountable. But some abstract nouns can also be used in a countable way.

uncountable	countable
<i>They did it with difficulty.</i>	<i>They've had a lot of difficulties.</i>
<i>Her voice sounded full of doubt.</i>	<i>I have my doubts about whether he's the right person for the job.</i>

In this dictionary, nouns which can be countable or uncountable are shown like this: [n C/U].

11 Nouns: singular and plural

Most countable nouns (see section 10) have both a singular and a plural form, showing the difference between 'one' and 'more than one'.

REGULAR PLURALS

The regular way of changing a noun from singular to plural is to add **-s** at the end.

dog – dogs, chair – chairs, difference – differences

For nouns ending in **-y**, you drop the **-y** and add **-ies** to form the plural.

dictionary – dictionaries, opportunity – opportunities

For nouns ending in **-o**, you add **-es** to form the plural.

tomato – tomatoes, potato – potatoes

IRREGULAR PLURALS

There are also several irregular ways of forming a plural. In this dictionary, irregular plurals are shown at the end of the entry, after the definition and examples.

1. With seven nouns you change the vowel. They are:

man – men *woman – women*
foot – feet *goose – geese*
mouse – mice *tooth – teeth*
louse – lice

2. With a few nouns you change the final **-f** to **-v** before adding the **-s** ending. They include:

knife – knives *leaf – leaves*
wife – wives *half – halves*

11: Nouns: singular and plural

Some nouns in this group have a regular plural as well: **scarfs** and **scarves**, **hoofs** and **hooves**. Both possibilities are correct.

3. With three nouns you add **-en**. They are:

*ox – oxen, child – children,
brother – brethren* (only in the religious sense)

4. A few nouns which have been borrowed from foreign languages have an irregular plural. They include:

stimulus – stimuli, crisis – crises, criterion – criteria, phenomenon – phenomena

Often, these nouns have two plurals: they have developed a regular plural but have also kept their original irregular one. In these cases, the regular form is more informal and popular; the irregular form tends to be used by specialists.

There are no certain formulas for success. (informal)
We have to learn all the relevant chemical formulae. (specialist)

5. A few nouns have no plural ending, but you can still use them in a singular or plural way: they include the names of some animals (such as **sheep**, **deer**, **cod**), certain nationalities (such as **Japanese**, **Swiss**), some nouns expressing quantity (such as **ton**, **p** (=pence)), and a few others (such as **aircraft**, **crossroads**, **kennels**, **offspring**).

The sheep was making a noise. *The sheep were making a noise.*

PLURALS FOR COMPOUND NOUNS

Compound nouns combine two or more words into a single unit. You usually make them plural by adding **-s** at the end of the word: **can-openers**, **grown-ups**. But in a few cases, the first part of the compound takes the **-s** ending, especially when the compound contains a preposition.

*runner-up – runners-up
passer-by – passers-by
man-of-war – men-of-war*

Sometimes, a regular plural form has developed, which is slowly replacing the irregular one.

spoonfuls (also *spoonsful*)
mother-in-laws (also *mothers-in-law*)

NOUNS WHICH ARE ONLY SINGULAR

Several nouns are used only in the singular. There are three main types:

1. Proper names – names of particular people, places, times, occasions, events, and so on.

John, Robinson, Christmas, Tuesday

You can use these in the plural only if you think of them in a 'countable' way. This is especially common with proper nouns expressing time.

*On Tuesdays I go swimming.
Are the Robinsons coming to the party?
We stayed with Mary three Christmasses ago.*

2. Most uncountable nouns, such as **music** and **advice**, are only singular (see section 10).

3. A group of nouns which you use in the singular even though they end in **-s**. These include the names of certain subjects, diseases, and games.

physics, linguistics, mumps, measles, billiards

A common mistake is to think of these as plural, and use them with a plural verb or form a singular noun from them.

Linguistics is fascinating. **NOT** *Linguistics are fascinating.*
Billiards is a game. **NOT** *Billiards are a game.*
Poor Mike's got measles. **NOT** *Poor Mike's got a measle.*

12: Determiners and articles

NOUNS WHICH ARE ONLY PLURAL

Several nouns are used only in the plural. There are three main types:

1. A few nouns are related to things consisting of two joined parts. They include **jeans**, **binoculars**, **trousers**, **pliers**, **scissors**. To talk about these in the singular, you use **a pair of**.

Your jeans are in the wash. **NOT** *Your jeans is in the wash.*
I need to buy another pair of jeans. **NOT** *I need to buy another jeans.*
 NOT *I need to buy another jean.*

2. A few nouns ending in **-s** are used only in the plural. They include **congratulations**, **outskirts**, **remains**, **stairs**, **thanks**.

The stairs were steep and winding. **NOT** *The stairs was steep and winding.*
 NOT *The stair was steep and winding.*

These are not uncountable nouns, because they are used with **how many**, not **how much**.

How many stairs are there? **NOT** *How much stairs are there?*

3. A few nouns express the idea of groups of people or animals. They include **people**, **folk**, **police**, **cattle**, **poultry**, **livestock**.

The police are outside. **NOT** *The police is outside.*
 NOT *The polices are outside.*

12 Determiners and articles

'Determiners' are used before a noun to 'determine' the character of the noun – in particular, how 'definite' or 'general' a noun it is, and whether it is 'one' or 'more than one'.

When you use a noun, you have the choice of using it in one of three possible states.

1. You can use the noun without any determiner at all.

■ in the singular, if it is a proper noun *Boston is on the east coast.*
■ in the singular, if it is an uncountable noun *I can hear music.*
■ in the plural, if it is a countable noun *Tigers have black stripes.*

When you use a plural countable noun without the article, you are seeing the noun in a general way – 'tigers in general'.

2. You can use the noun with either of the 'articles', **a** or **the**:

■ use **a** with singular, countable nouns *I can see a car.*
■ use **the** with singular countable nouns *I can see the car.*
■ use **the** with plural countable nouns *I can see the cars.*
■ use **the** with uncountable nouns *I can see the water.*

The articles are the most common determiners in English. Their main job is to say whether the noun is 'definite' or 'indefinite'.

3. You can use the noun with one of the other determiners. This adds a further meaning to the noun. For example:

determiner	adds the meaning of
my book	'possession' (also your , his , her etc)
this book	'nearness to the speaker' (also plural these)
that book	'distance from the speaker' (also plural those)
some books	'quantity' (also any)
enough books	'sufficiency'
each book	'item by item' (also every)
either book	'one of two' (also neither)
no book	'absence'
what book	'unknown item' (also which , whose etc)

⚠ You cannot use two determiners at the same time. Don't say things like 'the this car', 'my an apple', or 'some the cups'.

You can use other words or phrases expressing quantity in front of a determiner to make the meaning of the noun phrase more exact.

NOTE: (of) shows that you can leave out the word *of*.

<i>all (of) the people</i>	<i>both (of) the cats</i>	<i>half (of) the gold</i>
<i>double the amount</i>	<i>twice the cost</i>	<i>a third of the people</i>
<i>a few of the cars</i>	<i>half (of) that cake</i>	<i>some of those cakes</i>

You can also add certain quantity words after the determiner. They include the numerals, as well as a few general expressions of quantity.

*The **three** kittens were playing on the floor.*
*I've just taken my **fourth** examination.*
*He bought it on one of his **many** trips abroad.*

If you want to add adjectives to the noun phrase (see section 13), they always follow any determiners or other quantity expressions.

the three little kittens my fourth difficult examination his many interesting trips

WHEN TO USE 'A' AND 'THE'

A and **the** are called 'the articles'. **A** is called 'the indefinite article', and **the** is called 'the definite article'. They are used in the following ways:

1. The main use of **a** and **the** is to say whether you are talking about a noun for the first time, or whether you have mentioned it before. For a first-time mention, use **a**; for later mentions, use **the**.

*Mary bought a car and **a** bike, but she used **the** bike more often.*

2. If you use **the** with a noun that you have not mentioned before, you are actually saying to your listener 'you know which one I mean'. This is usually because there is only one example of the noun in the situation, or you have only one such example in your mind. That is why it is 'definite'.

Have you fed the cat? (=you have only one cat)
There's the hotel. (=that is the hotel we have been looking for)
I met him during the war. (=both you and your listener know which war you mean)
Pass the salt, please.

3. If you want to talk about something of a particular type in an indefinite way, use **a**.

*I'm training to be an engineer. **NOT** I'm training to be engineer.*
*I went out to buy a newspaper. **NOT** I went out to buy newspaper.*

4. Use **a** when you are talking about one of several things or people and it is not important to say which one. Use **the** when it is clear that you are talking about one particular thing or person and there is only one.

A man I work with told me about it. (=you work with several men)
The man I work with told me about it. (=you work with only one man)

5. You must use **the** with singular nouns such as **world**, **sky**, or **sun**, because there is only one of these things in the situation that you are talking about.

We're going to travel round the world.
Don't look directly at the sun.

6. If you are talking about buildings, places, and organizations as things which you often see or visit, use **the**. For example **the bank**, **the theatre**, **the cinema** etc.

I went to the theatre last week.
She's at the gym.

⚠ When **a** is used before a word that begins with a vowel, it changes to **an**

WHEN NOT TO USE 'A' OR 'THE'

1. If you want to use a countable noun in the plural to talk in general about something, don't use **the**.

Tigers are very fierce animals.
Prices keep going up.

2. If you want to use an uncountable noun to talk in general about something, don't use **the**.

*There has been a big increase in crime. **NOT** There has been a big increase in the crime.*
*It takes patience and skill to be a teacher. **NOT** It takes the patience and the skill to be a teacher.*

3. Most names of places or people that begin with a capital letter do not have **the** before them. Don't use **the** with these names.

*They're visiting Belgium and Holland. **NOT** They're visiting the Belgium and the Holland.*

However, there are some names that always have **the** in them, for example **the United States**, **the Nile** (=the big river in Egypt) etc. Don't forget to put **the** in these names.

*He's from the United States. **NOT** He's from United States.*

5. There are also many common nouns and phrases which do not use **a** or **the**. This is especially true when talking about meals, illnesses, ways of travelling, times and periods of time.

<i>Will you have lunch with me?</i>	NOT	<i>Will you have the lunch with me?</i>
<i>Her mother has cancer.</i>	NOT	<i>Her mother has the cancer.</i>
<i>I travel to work by bus.</i>	NOT	<i>I travel to work by the bus.</i>
<i>In winter we get a lot of snow.</i>	NOT	<i>In winter we get a lot of the snow.</i>
<i>It's time to go to bed.</i>	NOT	<i>It's time to go to the bed.</i>
<i>We got up at dawn.</i>	NOT	<i>We got up at the dawn.</i>

13 Word order

This section deals with two areas which can cause problems for students: word order with adjectives before a noun, and word order with adverbs after a noun.

WORD ORDER BEFORE THE NOUN

The main way of describing a noun is to use adjectives or words that are like adjectives. You add these words after **a**, **the**, **my**, **her** etc, before the noun. You can add as many as you want, but you sometimes need to be careful about the order in which you use them.

You have a choice of three kinds of word. The largest group consists of adjectives.

a lovely day a small round table the best students

You may also use a 'participle' before the noun – the **-ing** or **-ed** form of a verb, but here used to describe the noun.

a crumbling wall her smiling face a cracked window the stolen car

You may also add one noun before another – the first noun is used to describe the second noun, which is the main noun in the phrase.

the school buildings a tourist paradise a London bus

WHICH ORDER?

As soon as you use two or more describing words, you have to decide which order to put them in.

In many cases, there is no rule: you simply say first what comes into your mind first. But many adjectives, and the other kinds of describing word, are typically used in a particular place before the noun. You should think of these patterns only as a guide to help you, because there are a number of cases which do not follow the rule. But the following patterns are common:

1. Nouns go next to the main noun in the phrase, after any other adjectives.

a big London bus **NOT** *a London big bus*
the long country road **NOT** *the country long road*

2. Words which are closely related to nouns, such as the material something is made of or where something is from, also go next to the main noun.

big leather boots **NOT** *leather big boots*
a serious social problem **NOT** *a social serious problem*

3. Participles usually go in front of groups (1) and (2), but after any adjectives.

a broken garden chair **NOT** *a garden broken chair*
a smiling American tourist **NOT** *an American smiling tourist*
a happy smiling American tourist **NOT** *a smiling happy American tourist*

4. Adjectives with an 'intensifying' meaning, for example **entire**, **whole**, **same** go near the beginning, close to **a**, **the**, **my**, **her** etc.

the entire local committee **NOT** *the local entire committee*
the same old battered car **NOT** *the old battered same car*

5. Other adjectives follow (4) and go before (3). Those with a more general meaning usually come first, and those which describe properties of the noun which can be clearly seen, such as size and shape, usually come last. There are typical patterns here, too, as the table shows.

those lovely red curtains **NOT** *those red lovely curtains*
a strange triangular table **NOT** *a triangular strange table*

your opinion about sth	size	age	shape	colour	where sth is from	material
lovely	big	old	round	black	American	wool
beautiful	little	young	square	red	French	plastic
horrible	small	new	L-shaped	brown	Japanese	leather
etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc

WORD ORDER AFTER THE NOUN

Some adverbs of time and frequency usually come immediately after the main verb. These include:

always	almost	just
rarely	nearly	already
ever	never	still

She is always complaining. **NOT** *Always she is complaining.*
They are still working. **NOT** *Still they are working.*

Always and **never** are sometimes used at the beginning of a sentence in instructions and warnings, when the verb does not have a subject.

Always keep medicines away from children.
Never look directly at the sun through a telescope.

Adverbs and adverb phrases should not come between the verb and the object.

I like Japanese food very much. **NOT** *I like very much Japanese food.*

Adverbs and adverb phrases should not come between a main verb and an **-ing** participle, or between a main verb and an infinitive.

Tomorrow we'll go sightseeing. **NOT** *We'll go tomorrow sightseeing.*
In the evenings she likes to watch television. **NOT** *She likes in the evenings to watch television.*

Adverbs and adverb phrases should not come between a modal verb (for example **can**, **must**, **could**) and a main verb.

I can speak Spanish quite well. **NOT** *I can quite well speak Spanish.*

OTHER WORD ORDER PROBLEMS

The *Essential Activator* also has information about word order with the following words:

all ➔ see **ALL**
both ➔ see **TWO**
each ➔ see **ALL**

14 Comparison

COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES

If you want to compare two things, you use the comparative form of an adjective. For example the comparative form of **big** is **bigger**, and the comparative form of **interesting** is **more interesting**.

Your car is bigger than mine.
His new book is more interesting than his last one.

If you want to say that one thing is bigger, faster, more interesting etc than all the others of a group of things, you use the superlative form of an adjective. For example, the superlative form of **big** is **biggest**, and the superlative form of **interesting** is **the most interesting**.

It's the fastest motorcycle in the world.
What's the most delicious food you've ever eaten?

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FORM OF THE ADJECTIVE

If the adjective is one syllable long, you add **-er** or **-est** to it, sometimes making a change in the spelling.

adjective	comparative	superlative
tall	taller	tallest
big	bigger	biggest
nice	nicer	nicest

If the adjective is three or more syllables long, you add the words **more** or **most** before it.

That's a more interesting question.
Kim's question was the most interesting one.

The new trains are more comfortable than the old ones.
That's the most comfortable bed I've ever slept in.

Most adjectives with two syllables use **more** and **most** to form the comparative and superlative, but some two-syllable adjectives have **-er/-est** endings, and some two-syllable adjectives use both methods.

The **-er/-est** endings are possible with adjectives ending in **-y**, **-ow**, **-le**, **-er**, **-ure**. Don't forget that with adjectives that end in **-y**, the **-y** changes to **-i**.

adjective	comparative	superlative
happy	happier	happiest
gentle	gentler	gentlest
narrow	narrower	narrowest
clever	cleverer	cleverest

14: Comparison

You keep this pattern even in the cases where you can add **un-** to a two-syllable adjective.

unhappier/unhappiest

Proper and **eager** do not follow this rule: you can use only **more/most** with them.

You use **more/most** with all other two-syllable adjectives.

more/most active *more/most useful* *more/most recent*

In this dictionary, comparatives and superlatives are shown at the end of the entry if there is anything irregular or unpredictable about them.

ADJECTIVES THAT DO NOT FOLLOW THE NORMAL RULES

Not all adjectives follow the normal rules. Some adjectives have completely irregular forms. The most common ones are:

adjective	comparative	superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least

In this dictionary, we show these irregular forms at the end of the entry.

Words which are formed from a verb, and which end in **-ing**, **-ed**, or other past forms, always use **more/most**, no matter how many syllables they have.

His latest film is even more boring than his previous ones.

She was more shocked than I was.

COMPARING TWO THINGS WHICH ARE THE SAME

If you want to say that two things are the same size, the same height etc, you can say that one thing is **as big as** the other, **as tall as** the other etc.

She's as tall as her sister.

Do you think this summer will be as hot as last summer?

COMPARING TWO THINGS WHICH ARE NOT THE SAME

If you want to say that two things are not the same size, the same height etc, you can say that one thing is **not as big as** the other, **not as tall as** the other etc.

The meal wasn't as good as the last meal I had there.

I'm not as fat as him. OR I'm not as fat as he is.

London is not as expensive as some other European cities.

You can use **less ... than** to mean the same thing as **not as ... as**, but you usually use it with adjectives that have two or more syllables, for example **less expensive**, **less important**.

Value for money is less important than quality and reliability.

⚠ Don't use **less** with short adjectives such as **good**, **old** etc.

You can leave out the second **as** and the noun after it, if you have already mentioned or suggested the second thing that you are comparing.

The material looks like silk, but it's not as expensive. (=not as expensive as silk)

Similarly, you can also leave out the **than** part of the comparison when you are using **less**, if you have already mentioned or suggested the second thing that you are comparing.

I prefer the old Hollywood movies. They're much less violent. (=than modern films)

The buses are less crowded after 10 o'clock. (=than they are before 10 o'clock)

If you want to say that one type of thing is less expensive, less important etc than all other things of the same type, you can say that it is **the least expensive**, **the least important** etc.

People usually choose the least expensive brand.

⚠ Don't use **least** with short adjectives such as **good**, **old** etc.

15 Reported speech

REPORTING STATEMENTS**Direct speech**

If you want to write what someone has said, the simplest way is to repeat the exact words that they had used in quotation marks ("..."). This is called 'direct speech'.

"I really enjoyed the meal," he said.

She went upstairs and shouted, "Time to get up!"

If you mention the speaker at the end of the sentence, and do not say **he** or **she**, you usually reverse the order of the subject and the verb. For example:

"It's much too cold to swim," said Frank.

"Go back to your room," said her mother.

Indirect speech

You can also report what someone has said without using quotation marks. This is called 'indirect speech'. The usual way of doing this is to use a clause which begins with **+ (that)**. For example:

"I'm tired!"

He said he was tired. OR He said that he was tired.

That is more common in written English and in formal spoken English.

Changing from direct to indirect speech

When changing from direct to indirect speech, you need to change the grammar in certain ways.

Verb tense forms usually need to change. In most cases, you change the present tense into the past tense.

She said, "I am staying at the Chelsea Hotel."

She said that she was staying at the Chelsea Hotel.

If the direct speech is already in the past tense, you need to put the verb even further back in time, using **had**. This applies to both past tense and present perfect forms of the verb (see section 4).

He said, "I came by bus."

He said that he had come by bus.

She said, "I've definitely seen John recently."

She said that she had definitely seen John recently.

However, you do not use this rule if the verb in the direct speech already uses **had**.

She said, "I had given up hope of seeing him again."

She said that she had given up hope of seeing him again.

The correct relationship between the verbs in the reporting clause and the verb in the reported clause is called the 'sequence of tenses'.

If you report something that someone said, which is still true now, you do not need to change the tense of the verb.

"I want to get married."

She said she wants to get married.

"Blue's my favourite colour."

She said that blue's her favourite colour.

If the direct speech contains **will**, **shall**, or **may** (see section 7), these also need to change.

will → **would** **shall** → **should** **may** → **might**

She said, "I will see you soon."

She said that she would see us soon.

Would, **should**, **could**, **might**, and **must** do not change.

She said, "I could visit him on Thursday."

She said she could visit him on Thursday.

15: Reported speech

You also need to change certain personal pronouns. **I** and **you** have to be changed to **he** and **she**, unless the original people are still taking part in the conversation. Similarly, **my** and **your** need to be changed to **his** and **her**.

Mary said to John, "I saw your cat."

Mary said that she had seen your cat. (if the person who says this is talking to John)

Mary said that she had seen his cat. (if the person who says this is not talking to John)

You also need to change times and places which depend on the speaker's point of view.

He said, "I saw the car here yesterday."

He said that he'd seen the car there the day before.

In this case **here** becomes **there** because you are in a different place, and **yesterday** becomes **the day before** because you are now speaking at a later time.

Similarly, **now** becomes **then**, **last week** becomes **the week before**, **two months ago** becomes **two months before**, **tomorrow** becomes **the next day**, and so on. Of course, if the time phrase does not depend on the speaker's point of view, it can be used without change.

He said, "I bought the car in November 1996."

He said he had bought the car in November 1996.

REPORTING QUESTIONS

When you are changing a question from direct speech into indirect speech, you follow the same kinds of rules as for statements. The only differences are that you need to use a different word to introduce the reported speech, and the word order of the question becomes like that of a statement. You end the sentence with a full stop, not a question mark.

You use **if** or **whether** to introduce a 'yes-no question'.

I asked, "Does he eat meat?"

I asked whether he ate meat. **OR** *I asked if he ate meat.*

You introduce questions where there is a choice in the same way – more usually by using **whether** than by using **if**.

I asked, "Is it Karen's book or Michael's?"

I asked whether it was Karen's book or Michael's.

You introduce questions that begin with **who**, **why**, **what**, **how** etc by using the word which begins the question in direct speech.

Someone asked, "Why doesn't she resign?"

Someone asked why she didn't resign.

She asked, "When will you go back to Japan?"

She asked when he would go back to Japan.

You often mention the person who is being asked the question, by using a pronoun (**him**, **her**, **them** etc) or by mentioning their name.

I asked him if he ate meat.

She asked Michael when he would go back to Japan.

REPORTING WHAT SOMEONE HAS TOLD OR ASKED ANOTHER PERSON TO DO

When saying what someone has told or asked another person to do, you usually use an infinitive.

"Go home!"

She told him to go home.

"Can you shut the window?"

She asked him to shut the window.



Don't confuse **say** and **tell**. Don't say 'He said me to go home.' or 'He told, Go home!' Say **He told me to go home.** or **He said, "Go home!"**