What is Grammar?

Grammar is a word that we use when referring to the fundamental rules that make up English; you can think of grammar as "the structures that make up a language", the common rules that we all use when speaking the same language. We need the grammar to make sure that we are communicating effectively and ensure our message is clearly understood.

However, we also don't need to be 100% accurate with our grammar all of the time: some grammar errors in spoken language are completely fine, and they often go unnoticed. With writing, though, it's a different story: written language is more thoughtfully crafted, so it has to always be grammatically accurate.

You tend to learn grammar in schools when you're younger, but you also naturally pick up grammatical rules as a child when you're learning to speak your first language. For example, if I say the sentence:

I have a car.

Anyone who speaks English understands what that means.

If I mess with the grammar of that sentence, for example changing the verb:

I am had a car.

It becomes unclear now whether I have a car now, or whether I used to have one in the past.

If I mess around with the noun, it can also be unclear:

I have a cars.

This time, you don't know whether I have one car, or more than one.

The syntax is also an important aspect of grammar and communication - this is the term that we use to describe word order and the structure of the sentences. If I mess with the syntax, the meaning again becomes unclear:

I a car have.

Have I a car.

The first one sounds like I've turned into Yoda, the second sounds like it might be a question.

So, you can see from this simple example of how important it is to have the right grammar in order to communicate properly in English, or in fact in any language.

Key Grammar Terms

Nouns - objects, people, places, or things e.g. <u>box, Tom, France, cats</u>.

Adjectives - words that describe a noun e.g. heavy, <u>little, pink</u>.

Articles - 'the' or 'a'/'an', words that show whether a noun is specific or general.

Verbs - action words and states of being e.g. <u>run, swim, think, feel</u>.

Adverbs - words that describe a verb e.g. <u>quickly, angrily, sometimes, often.</u>

Tense - whether a verb is referring to the past, present or future e.g. <u>I ran, I run, I will run</u>.

Prepositions - words that show the position of one thing to another e.g. <u>over, next to, before</u>.

Why do we need grammar?

Aside from what I've discussed already, there are many advantages to having a good base in grammar. Here are a few reasons why grammar is essential to getting good grades or being successful with your work:

- Enhance communication.
- Make your ideas clearer and stronger.
- Get a better grasp of the subtle rules of English.
- Understand and express more intelligent and complex ideas, rather than sounding simple or basic.
- Give a good professional impression in the workplace or with clients.
- Give a good academic impression with school, college, or university work.
- Increase your confidence when speaking or writing, in order to make you feel that you can express yourself more.

It is easy nowadays to just rely on grammar and spell checkers when typing on a computer or communicating via emails. However, this does nothing to improve a person's grammatical capabilities; our capacity for expression will always be limited if we only rely on technology rather than educating ourselves properly.

All of these examples above allow you to get better grades, but they also help you in other real-life situations. There are more times than I can count where having a good understanding of grammar and syntax has helped me in my work and personal life - especially in difficult situations! If you can communicate better, you will be better at any job that requires speaking and/or writing (that's almost all of them!). Furthermore, you will find that you can fix or navigate successfully any problem that comes your way.

Levels of formality

Generally the more formal a piece of writing, the greater need there will be to use accurate grammar. If you are in a professional or academic situation then you absolutely need to be using grammar accurately, and not just in a basic way either.

When do we use it?

All the time! Although it is more acceptable to be grammatically incorrect when speaking than it is when writing. Some forms of writing require very strict rules about formal grammar:

- Formal letters
- Official forms, documents, and statements

- Essays
- Coursework or Non-Exam Assessments
- Classwork
- Professional emails and correspondence
- CVs and job application forms
- Governmental documents
- Important situations such as signing legal documents

Some require less strict rules:

- Informal letters
- Virtual messages - text, messenger, WhatsApp, etc
- Creative writing - needs good grammar generally but can sometimes break the rules on purpose
- Article writing - needs a balance between formal and informal language