

**A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR
OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:
INTRODUCTORY LESSONS**

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A practical grammar of the English language: introductory lessons by Leonard Bliss

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LEONARD BLISS

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

This little manual, which is presented to the public as introductory to a more comprehensive and complete treatise on the subject of English grammar, has been prepared expressly for children and youth just beginning the study. Its design is to teach them, in a plain, common-sense manner, the more simple and essential principles of the language.

It has been prepared and arranged on a plan, which, after much experience in teaching, I was led to adopt for the instruction of the youngest classes in English grammar, as the only mode by which I could succeed in conveying at once to the mind of the child clear and tangible ideas on the subject. However excellent many of the text-books might be, for those learners who had previously acquired some idea of the different parts of speech and of the import of grammar, I found none exactly adapted to the wants of those just commencing the study. For, though they might learn words in abundance, they rarely acquired *ideas*, till after I had explained the lessons to them orally, illustrating each principle fully by examples. For this reason I very seldom put a text-book on grammar into their hands, till, by oral instruction, I had enabled them to distinguish the different parts of speech, in any page of prose that might be given them, and to tell the leading attributes of each.

My mode of doing this was, to commence with the simplest part of speech—for instance, the noun; to describe it in the most familiar language, by telling them that “any name is a noun,” and then to point to the objects they could see around them, and ask their names, and tell them that the words which are the names of those objects are “nouns;” and that “all words which are names are nouns.” They were then required to take their reading books, and point out the nouns in a page, being suffered to pass over, however, the abstract nouns, till they were perfectly conversant with the substantive nouns. In the same way I taught the different attributes of nouns, as number, gender, &c.; and also went over all the other parts of speech, commenting in each instance with the most simple.

Many teachers, I am persuaded, have been led by experience to adopt a similar course in their practice; though I have seen but one elementary book on grammar, written on a similar plan. This was by the late Joseph Buchanan, A. M., a native of Kentucky; it was published at Lexington, in this State, in 1826. The author commenced with the *right idea*, but did not carry it out fully, so as to profit by it as he evidently ought to have done. To his treatise, entitled “A Practical Grammar of the English Language, in three parts, adapted to all capacities”—excellent so far as he adhered to the

idea with which he set out,—I am, however, indebted for many valuable hints in preparing these Introductory Lessons. To aid teachers, in the practical mode of instruction I have described, and to enable young learners, by the means of repeated examples and exercises, to acquire ideas while they study words, I have prepared, and now submit to intelligent teachers, this little manual. It will soon be followed by a more full and comprehensive work, which, in conjunction with Professor Butler, of the department of Ancient Languages in the same institution with myself, I am now preparing for more advanced students. To this the teacher and learner are referred for a more full explanation of those intricacies and niceties of the language herein purposely omitted. L. B. Jr.

LOUISVILLE COLLEGE, }
August 20, 1839. }

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The rapid sale of the first edition of the "Introductory Lessons," and the great favor which the work has found with intelligent teachers, in every part of the country to which it has been sent, have encouraged me to bestow great care on a preparation of the second edition. I have carefully revised the whole, and re-written many parts, profiting by every suggestion made to me by those teachers, who, having tested the merits of the book by using it in the instruction of their classes, were qualified to speak from experience of its excellencies and defects. Those who were kind enough, in writing to me on the subject, to point out faults as well as merits, will see that many of their suggestions have been heeded. Such will please accept my thanks for the favors they have done me; and will also oblige me by being equally faithful and critical in the examination of the present edition. My ambition respecting this little manual, is, to make it as perfect as possible, as an elementary book in a branch of English education, certainly not yielding, in importance, to any other—the study of our mother tongue—but which is usually found to be uninteresting and unintelligible to young scholars. Trifling additions have been made to some of the lessons, which, I trust, will approve themselves to teachers generally, who have adopted the first edition.

L. B. Jr.

February 10, 1840.

ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

INTRODUCTORY LESSONS.

LESSON I.

1. The name of any person, place, or thing, is a Noun.

EXAMPLES.

The words, *book, pen, hat, boy, girl, city, Franklin, Washington*, are called nouns, because they are names.

EXERCISES.

Tell the nouns among the following words.

Hand, the, an, house, and quill, school, of, dog, with, good, cat, rat, to, pin, blue, stove, axe, hoe, on, horse, bird, story, up, off, sun, moon, stars, broom, in, grass, from, for, bread, meat, tea, coffee, white, or, milk, shall, apple, pear, peach.

Red, yellow, brick, rock, cake, below, river, Ohio, sugar, or, high, Louisville, Cincinnati, over, shoe, New Orleans.

Brave, bravery, good, goodness, coward, cowardice, benevolent, benevolence, swift, swiftness, soft, softness, gentle, gentleness, wicked, wickedness.

Dogs bark. A mouse has two ears. The doors and windows are open. This is my new book. It

is full of stories and pictures. Will you have some apples and pears? I will take some peaches and plums. Do you like raisins? Yes; but I like figs and dates better. Ripe cherries are excellent fruit.

What is a noun? Which of the above words are nouns? How do you tell them from the other words? Which nouns are the names of things? Which are the names of persons? Which of places? Which are the names of qualities of persons? or things?

Mention three names of persons not in the above sentences. Three of places. Three of countries. Three of rivers. Three of things that may be seen. Three of qualities, as bravery, goodness, &c.

NOTE TO TEACHERS.—Do not let your pupils proceed to the next lesson till they are perfectly familiar with the idea of the noun, and are able to designate the nouns in any sentence that may be given them. For this purpose it will be well to let them take their reading books, and point out all the nouns in a lesson; and to let them repeat the exercise till they are able readily to distinguish the nouns from every other part of speech.

LESSON II.

2. When a noun means but one thing, it is in the Singular Number; when it means more than one, it is in the Plural Number.

EXAMPLES.

The words, *boy, book, box, hat, pen, table*, are in the singular number; and *boys, books, boxes, hats, pens, and tables*, are in the plural number.

EXERCISES.

Tell which of the following nouns are in the singular number, and which are in the plural:

The good boy fears to do a wrong action, because it is wrong. A wicked man obeys not the

commandments of God, nor regards the laws of man. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests.

Let us walk amid the flowers of the garden, or sit under the shade of those stately trees. The birds are singing in the grove, and the young lambs are frisking in the meadow.

There are ten pigeons on the tree, and three squirrels on the fence. There is a large hawk hovering in the air, and watching the hen and chickens, or those doves upon the roof of the house.

When is a noun in the singular number?

When in the plural number?

Which of the above nouns are singular?

Which are plural?

3. Most nouns make their plural number by adding *s* to the singular:

As, *lamp, lamps; map, maps; stove, stoves; apple, apples.*

4. Many nouns make their plural by adding *es* to the singular:

As, *church, churches; box, boxes; fox, foxes; glass, glasses.*

5. Some nouns that end in *y*, make their plural by adding *es*, and changing the *y* into *i*:

As, *fly, flies; cry, cries; berry, berries; cherry, cherries.*

6. Most nouns which end with *f* or *fe*, make the plural by adding *s* or *es* to the singular, and changing the *f* into *v*:

As, *wife, wives; life, lives; loaf, loaves; leaf, leaves; sheaf, sheaves; calf, calves; half, halves; knife, knives.*
The noun *staff* has for its plural *staves*.

7. A few nouns do not follow any of the above rules, but form their plurals in different ways:

As, *man, men, woman, women, ox, oxen, child, children, mouse, mice.*

How do most nouns make their plural?

How do many other nouns make their plural?

How do some nouns ending in *y* make their plural?

How do some nouns ending with *f* or *fe* make their plural?

Mention some nouns that form their plural irregularly.

How many numbers have nouns?

8. *Ans.* Two, Singular and Plural.

Spell the plurals of the the following words: *ox, dish, wish, ally, sash, cry, sky, man, mouse.*

Spell the singular of the following nouns: *flies, knives, wives, loaves, leaves, lives, calves, keys, berries.*

NOTE TO TEACHERS.—Let the class take their Readers, as recommended in the lesson before, and point out the nouns in a page, and tell the number of each. If the noun is in the singular number, let them tell how the plural is formed; and, if in the plural, let them tell what its singular is. In the same manner let the teacher multiply the examples of each lesson succeeding.

LESSON III.

9. The names of males are in the Masculine gender:

As, *man, boy, master, brother, William, father.*

10. The names of females are in the Feminine gender:

As, woman, girl, mistress, sister, Mary, mother.

11. The names of things, neither male nor female, are in the Neuter gender:

As, book, pen, house, table, bench.

12. Names that may stand either for males or females, are in the Common gender:

As, parent, friend, cousin, bird, squirrel, mouse.

EXERCISES.

Tell the nouns among the following words, and their numbers and genders:

Father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, husband, son, daughter, wife, hats, shoes, chair, sisters, queens, houses, hens, cow, river, horses, trees, apples, inkstand, quills, caps, swords, musket, princess, maid, lamp, bottles, lady, lion, lioness, hero, prince, man-servant, emperor, rocks, mountain, maid-servant.

The cow gives milk for little boys and girls; the horse carries them on his back. The hen lays eggs. My friend is ill.

George lives in Philadelphia. In the field were two horses, three cows, five hens, and a boy. Where was Eliza going this morning with her little brother? The name of that small boy, with black eyes and dark hair, is Thomas. My cousins have arrived. The birds are singing.