

**FIRST LESSONS IN
ENGLISH
GRAMMAR**

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First Lessons in English Grammar by Simon Kerl

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE following treatise is an attempt to put the science of grammar upon a more simple, natural, and practical basis. That the schools of our country are generally restless under the present systems of grammar, and that the results obtained from the study of this science are not generally satisfactory, may be taken as conclusive evidence that the time has come for some radical change in this department of education.

It is rather remarkable at how early an age children learn to speak their mother-tongue; and this fact proves that they are also able to understand the great and obvious principles of language early, — certainly before their minds are overrun with those errors of expression which seem to spring up, in every community, as naturally and inevitably as weeds.

To see what is true or right in the niceties of grammar, is often a puzzling matter even to persons of mature and cultivated judgment; and it is unreasonable to suppose that young children can master dim subtleties, or that they will take pleasure in what must appear to them incomprehensible and useless.

It is therefore probably best to teach them as much practical grammar as possible, but with just as little of the science as will suffice for this purpose. Let them learn to avoid, as soon as they can, all the common errors of language; and when they are older, and have time to study farther, they can learn more of the science in one year than many of them now learn in two or three years. The common mode of teaching grammar seems to us rather an inverted one. Children are worried for years in the abstractions of analysis and parsing, from which they often acquire a loathing and permanent dislike to grammar itself; yet, after all, when they quit school, most of them know, in regard to language, but little of that for which especially they were sent to school, — namely, to speak and write their mother-tongue with propriety.

We have divided our subject into three principal parts; *definitions, inflections, and constructions*. The first part comprises a bundle of about one hundred definitions, — all the important ones needed in the study of grammar. In making these definitions, we endeavored to embody in them truth, brevity, simplicity, and uniformity. In the second part we have given about all the inflections of our language; because these things are not only needed, but they require simply memory, and can be learned in early life just as well as afterwards. The third part comprises nearly the whole circuit of syntax, with pithy exercises to teach the pupil how to avoid all the common errors. The remaining matter is subordinate, and gives roundness and finish to the whole subject. A more minute analysis of the contents is given on the next page.

SYNOPSIS.

PART I. — DEFINITIONS.

1. THE few great ideas which lie at the basis of grammar, and from which the science unfolds itself.
2. Definitions of the parts of speech.
3. Definitions of the properties of the parts of speech.
4. Definitions of the classes into which the parts of speech are divided.

(Given after the properties, because somewhat dependent on them.)

5. A circuit of exercises, to give the pupil a clear and practical knowledge of the preceding principles, and to show him the general construction of sentences.

PART II. — INFLECTIONS.

1. How gender is expressed.
2. How number is expressed.
3. How case is expressed.
4. Declension of nouns and pronouns.
5. List of irregular verbs.
6. Conjugation of verbs.
7. How the degrees of comparison are expressed.
8. Adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections, classified, and illustrated by examples.

(Some of these words are substitutes for inflections.)

PART III. — CONSTRUCTIONS.

1. The rules of syntax, with examples to show correct construction and incorrect construction in contrast.
2. Parsing.
3. Analysis.
4. The remaining kinds of error.

APPENDIX.

1. Letters, syllables, and words.
2. Rules for spelling.
3. Derivation.
4. Capital letters.
5. Italics.
6. Punctuation.
7. Conclusion.

REMARKS.

| denotes separation. = is placed between equivalent expressions.

A number placed over a word shows which Rule of Syntax should be applied to it. What is to be committed to memory by the pupil, is printed in large type, or is distinguished by being numbered with heavy black figures.

The few technical or difficult words which we have been obliged to use, the teacher should explain.



FIRST LESSONS
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PART I.

• DEFINITIONS.

THOUGHT AND ITS EXPRESSION.

1. We *think*, or have *thoughts*.
2. We express our thoughts by means of *words*.
3. Words are either spoken or written.
4. The expressing of our thoughts by means of words, is called *language*, or *speech*.
5. Language consists of many thousands of words ; but they can all be divided into nine classes, called *Parts of Speech*.
6. The PARTS OF SPEECH are *Nouns*, *Pronouns*, *Articles*, *Adjectives*, *Verbs*, *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, *Conjunctions*, and *Interjections*.
7. To these nine classes of words belong eight chief properties ; *Gender*, *Person*, *Number*, *Case*, *Voice*, *Mood*, *Tense*, and *Comparison*.

These classes of words, and their properties, are based mainly on the following ten things or ideas: *Objects, Actions, Qualities, Sex, Number, Relation,* Manner, Time, Place, and Degree.*

The teacher can not spend an hour better with his class than in explaining the preceding paragraph, and thence the remainder of the section.



PARTS OF SPEECH.

NOUNS.

When we look around us, we naturally first notice objects. The words *John, Mary, tree, house, street, man, horse, apple, flower, rose, chair, desk, book,* are, all of them, words that denote objects, and such words are called *nouns*.

8. A **Noun** is a name.

Ex.—“Now bright the sun upon *St. Lawrence* smiles,
Her million *lilies*, and her thousand *isles*.”

What animals are on farms? What things can boys eat? What things do children play with? What objects did you see this morning, on your way to school? Who are your classmates? What would you call the words you have mentioned?

You can generally tell whether a word is a noun or not, by considering whether it denotes something that you can see, hear, taste, smell, or feel, or think of as being a person or thing.

Tell me which are the nouns in the following sentences:—

Lions and ostriches are found in Africa.

John and Joseph drove the horses to the pasture.

Pinks and roses are blooming in the garden.

Apples, peaches, and melons, are brought to market.

* Considered here chiefly in regard to Person and Case.

PRONOUNS.

When objects are near to us, or are already known by having been mentioned, we do not always use their names, but certain little words in stead of the names. If I say, "William promised Mary that William would lend Mary William's grammar, that Mary might study the grammar," you can easily see that the sentence is clumsy and disagreeable, because I have so often repeated the words *William*, *Mary*, and *grammar*. But if I say, "William promised Mary that *he* would lend *her his* grammar, that *she* might study *it*," you notice that the sentence is much more simple and agreeable, because I have used the little words *he*, *she*, and *it*, for the nouns *William*, *Mary*, and *grammar*, in stead of repeating these nouns. *Pronoun* means *for a noun*; and pronouns are so called because they are used *for nouns*, or *in stead of nouns*.

9. A Pronoun is a word used in stead of a noun.

Ex. — "My mother! when *I* learned that *thou* wast dead, Say, wast *thou* conscious of the tears *I* shed?"

The most common pronouns are *I*, *my*, *myself*, *mine*, *me*, *we*, *our*, *ourselves*, *ours*, *us*, *you*, *your*, *yourself*, *yours*, *ye*, *thou*, *thy*, *thysself*, *thine*, *thee*, *he*, *his*, *him*, *himself*, *she*, *her*, *herself*, *hers*, *it*, *itself*, *its*, *they*, *their*, *theirs*, *them*, *themselves*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *which*, *what*, and *that*. The easiest way in which you can generally distinguish a pronoun from a noun, is to consider whether the word denotes an object, without being itself the name of the object. "*I* saw *you*." Here *I* denotes me, without being my name; and *you* denotes the person spoken to, without being his name.

Put suitable pronouns for the words in *Italic letters*:—

John has learned *John's* lesson. Mary has torn *Mary's*