

**MANUAL OF ENGLISH
GRAMMAR
AND COMPOSITION. IN
FIVE PARTS**

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Manual of English Grammar and Composition. In Five Parts by J. C. Nesfield

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J. C. NESFIELD

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GRAMMAR
AND COMPOSITION. IN
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MANUAL OF
ENGLISH GRAMMAR
AND COMPOSITION

BY

J. C. NESFIELD, M.A.

AUTHOR OF 'ENGLISH GRAMMAR PAST AND PRESENT,' 'HISTORICAL
ENGLISH AND DERIVATION,' ETC.

IN FIVE PARTS

- I. PARSING AND ANALYSIS
II.—COMPOSITION: FORCE AND PROPRIETY OF DICTION
III.—ENLARGEMENT OF VOCABULARY: FIGURES OF SPEECH
IV.—PROSE AND POETRY
V.—HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE

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CONTENTS

PART I.—PARSING AND ANALYSIS.

CHAP.	PAGE
1. ANALYSIS IN OUTLINE	1
2. THE PARTS OF SPEECH IN OUTLINE : PHRASES	7
1. The Parts of Speech. 2. Classification of Phrases.	
3. NOUNS	16
1. The kinds of Nouns. 2. Gender. 3. Number. 4. Case.	
4. ADJECTIVES	26
1. The kinds of Adjectives. 2. The two Uses of Adjectives. 3. Comparison of Adjectives.	
5. PRONOUNS	31
1. Personal Pronouns. 2. Demonstrative Pronouns. 3. Relative or Conjunctive Pronouns. 4. Interrogative Pronoun.	
6. VERBS	39
1. The kinds of Verbs. 2. Transitive Verbs. 3. Intransitive Verbs. 4. Auxiliary Verbs. 5. Active and Passive Voices. 6. Complete Conjugation of a Verb in the Finite Moods. 7. Indicative Mood. 8. Imperative Mood. 9. Subjunctive Mood. 10. Infinitive Mood. 11. Participles. 12. Gerunds and Verbal Nouns. 13. The Strong and Weak Conjugations. 14. Defective, Irregular, and Impersonal Verbs.	
7. ADVERBS	70
1. The Functions of Adverbs. 2. The kinds of Adverbs. 3. Comparison of Adverbs. 4. Verbs compounded with Adverbs. 5. The two Uses of Adverbs.	
8. PREPOSITIONS	75
9. CONJUNCTIONS	78
1. Co-ordinative Conjunctions. 2. Subordinative Conjunctions.	
10. INTERJECTIONS	80
11. THE SAME WORD AS DIFFERENT PARTS OF SPEECH	81
12. SYNTAX AND PARSING	84
13. ANALYSIS IN DETAIL	93
1. Sentences Simple, Compound, and Complex. 2. Scheme of Analysis in Detail. 3. Degrees of Subordination.	
EXAMPLES IN PARSING AND ANALYSIS	107
EXAMPLES IN DIRECT AND INDIRECT NARRATION	114
PART II.—COMPOSITION : FORCE AND PROPRIETY OF DICTION.	
14. PUNCTUATION, OR THE RIGHT USE OF STOPS	118
15. THE NORMAL ORDER OF WORDS	126

CHAP.	PAGE
16. INVERSION OF THE NORMAL ORDER : EMPHASIS	135
17. STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES	141
18. PURITY OF DICTION	150
19. PROPRIETY OF DICTION	156
1. Common Errors in the Use of Common Words. 2. Words used in Wrong Senses or Wrong Connections.	
PLURALS IN SPECIAL SENSES	176
20. PERSPICUITY OR CLEARNESS OF DICTION	178
1. Grammatical Precautions. 2. The Obscure. 3. The Double Meaning.	
21. SIMPLICITY OR EASE OF DICTION	189
22. BREVITY OR TERSENESS OF DICTION	195
23. ELEGANCE OF DICTION	204
PART III.—ENLARGEMENT OF VOCABULARY : FIGURES OF SPEECH.	
24. ENLARGEMENT BY COMPOSITION	210
1. Unrelated or Juxta-positional Compounds. 2. Re- lated or Syntactical Compounds.	
25. ENLARGEMENT BY PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES	214
1. Teutonic Prefixes. 2. Teutonic Suffixes. 3. Romanic Prefixes. 4. Romanic Suffixes. 5. Greek Prefixes. 6. Greek Suffixes. 7. Some General Results, with Questions.	
26. FIGURES OF RHETORIC	230
27. ENLARGEMENT OF VOCABULARY BY METAPHOR AND METONYMY	252
PART IV.—PROSE AND POETRY.	
28. MAIN DIVISIONS OF PROSE-COMPOSITION	266
1. Classification according to Matter. 2. Classification according to Form.	
29. PROSODY AND POETIC DICTION	284
1. Prosody. 2. Poetic Diction.	
30. MAIN DIVISIONS OF POETRY	296
PART V.—HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE.	
31. ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF ENGLISH	304
1. English and Cognate Languages. 2. Old English. 3. Middle English. 4. Modern English.	
32. BORROWINGS	319
1. Celtic. 2. Danish or Later Scandian. 3. Dutch. 4. Latin. 5. French. 6. Greek. 7. Modern Borrowings ; Miscellaneous.	
33. NOTES ON AFFIXES AND ACCIDENCE	333
1. Origin of Teutonic Affixes. 2. Noun Forms. 3. Adjec- tive Forms. 4. Pronoun Forms. 5. Verb Forms.	
INDEX OF SUBJECTS AND SELECTED WORDS	343

PART I—PARSING AND ANALYSIS.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS IN OUTLINE.

This chapter assumes that the student has a rough knowledge of the Parts of Speech to start with.

1. Sentence.—When one person says something to another, or puts what he says into writing, he uses a combination of words which is called a sentence :—

Fire burns.

Here "fire" is the thing talked about. The word "fire," though it names the thing, does not make a sentence. It is a *name*, and nothing more. It is only by adding such a word as "burns" to the word "fire," that is, by *saying* what the thing (fire) does, that we can make a sentence.

Definition.—A sentence is a combination of words, in which something is *said* about something else.

Note.—That which is "*said*" may be an assertion, or a command, or a question, or a wish, or an exclamation,—whatever, in fact, can be expressed by a Finite verb (on the meaning of Finite verb see § 5). Thus there are five different kinds of sentences :—

- (a) **Assertive**, affirming or denying. (*Indicative Mood.*)
A man's success *depends* chiefly on himself. (*Affirmative.*)
He *did not get* much help from others. (*Negative.*)
- (b) **Imperative**, commanding or prohibiting. (*Imperative Mood.*)
Rely chiefly on your own efforts. (*Command, Advice.*)
Do not rely much on the help of others. (*Prohibition.*)
- (c) **Interrogative**, asking a question. (*Indicative Mood.*)
Have you finished that task ?
- (d) **Optative**, expressing a wish. (*Subjunctive Mood.*)
Thy kingdom come, thy will *be done*.
- (e) **Exclamatory**, expressing some emotion. (*Indicative Mood.*)
What a foolish fellow you have been !

2. Subject and Predicate.—Every sentence, when it is expressed in full, consists of two parts, a Subject and a Predicate.

In a very short sentence like "fire burns," the word "fire" (which is called a Noun) expresses the whole of the Subject, and the word "burns" (which is called a Finite Verb) expresses the whole of the Predicate.

However long a sentence may be, it can always be divided into the same two parts as the shortest sentence :—

<i>Subject.</i>	<i>Predicate.</i>
(1) Fire	burns.
(2) A fierce fire	burnt down my house.
(3) A fierce fire, breaking out yesterday,	completely burnt down my house.
(4) A fierce fire, suddenly breaking out yesterday afternoon,	completely* burnt down my house and many others in the same street.
(5) A fierce fire, suddenly breaking out yesterday afternoon at four o'clock,	completely burnt down my house and all the other houses in the same street except five.

Definitions.—The Subject of a sentence is a word or words denoting what we speak about.

The Predicate is a word or words by which we say something about the thing denoted by the Subject.

Note 1.—In *grammar* the Subject is not "what we speak about," but "the word or words denoting what we speak about." Grammar deals exclusively with words, and this fact has to be recognised in all the definitions.

Note 2.—Such a sentence as "Go!" is elliptical. Here the Subject "thou" or "you" is understood. Still more elliptical is a sentence in which the Subject and the Finite verb are both understood :—

Companion, hence !—SHAKESPEARE.

To express this sentence in full, we have to say—

Companion, go thou hence !

3. Nominative or its equivalent.—The predicate-verb has for its Subject some noun or noun-equivalent of the same number (Singular or Plural) and the same person (First, Second, or Third) as the verb itself. The noun that stands as Subject to a verb is invariably in the Nominative case, and so it is best to call it a Nominative at once.

Fire | burns.

Here "fire" is the Nominative to the predicate-verb "burns."

A pronoun is a very common form of noun-equivalent :—

He | is standing outside.

We cannot say "*Him* is standing outside." So the pronoun like the noun must be in the Nominative case.

But in (a) the verb is in the *First* person, because its Nom. "I" is in the *First* person, and in the *Singular* number, because its Nom. "I" is *Singular*. Similarly in (b) the verb is in the *Third* person, because its Nom. "they" is in the *Third* person, and *Plural*, because its Nom. "they" is *Plural*.

Note.—Those parts of a verb which are not finite, that is, are not limited to number and person, are of three kinds:—(1) the **Infinitive** mood, as "I wish *to retire*"; (2) a **Participle**, as "a *retired* officer"; (3) a **Gerund** or Verbal noun, as "I think of *retiring*." These, though they are parts of a verb, have lost what is most essential in the verb-character; that is, they do not enable us to *say* anything about anything else, and therefore they can never be the verb of a Predicate.

6. Completion of Finite Verb.—Some verbs make a complete sense by themselves. If so, they are called **Intransitive verbs of Complete Predication**:—

Fish *swim*. Rivers *flow*. All animals *die*.

Other verbs do not make a complete sense by themselves, but require some word or words to be added for this purpose. Such additional word or words are called the **Completion**.

The Completion may be either (a) an **Object**, or (b) a **Complement**; and there is one class of verb (**Factitive**, see below) that requires both:—

(a) **Object**:—

A verb that requires an object is called **Transitive**. "Transitive" means "passing over" or "passing on." A verb is **Transitive**, when the action denoted by it does not stop with the doer, but passes on to something else:—

Ships *traverse the ocean*. He shot *a tiger*.

There is no sense, or at least a very imperfect sense, in saying "Ships *traverse*," "He *shot*."

A **Transitive verb** may even have *two* objects:—

He asked *me a difficult question*.

To say "he asked" gives a very incomplete sense. "He asked me" brings the sense a step nearer to completion. But the sense is not really completed till we say, "He asked me a difficult question."

(b) **Complement**:—

This word is used to denote any kind of completion except the object or objects to a **Transitive verb**. **Transitive verbs** which need a complement as well as an object are called **Factitive**; **Intransitive verbs** which need a complement are called **Copulative**.

That grief drove him (Object) *mad* (Complement) (*Factitive*.)
He seems to be *mad* (Complement) (*Copulative*.)