Codicote School
Grammar & Punctuation – a simple guide

adjective A word that modifies, quantifies, or otherwise describes a noun or pronoun. Drizzly November; midnight dreary; only requirement.

adverb A word that modifies or otherwise qualifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Gestures *gracefully*; *exceptionally* quiet engine.

adverbial phrase A phrase that functions as an adverb. (See phrase.) Landon laughs with abandon.

agreement The correspondence of a verb with its subject in person and number (*Karen goes* to Codicote School; *her sisters go* to Secondary School), and of a pronoun with its antecedent in person, number, and gender (As soon as *Karen* finished the exam, *she* picked up *her* books and left the room).

antecedent The noun to which a pronoun refers. A pronoun and its antecedent must agree in person, number, and gender. *Michael* and *his* teammates moved off the pitch.

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Apostrophe Apostrophes are used:
- To show possession
- To show omission

Apostrophes showing possession
 You use an apostrophe to show that a thing or person belongs or relates to someone or something: Ben's party and yesterday's weather.
With a singular noun or most personal names: add an apostrophe plus s:
- *We met at Ben's party.*
- *The dog's tail wagged rapidly.*
- *Yesterday's weather was dreadful*.

Personal names that end in –s
With personal names that end in -s: add an apostrophe plus s when you would naturally pronounce an extra s if you said the word out loud:
He joined Charles's army in 1642.

Note that there are some exceptions to this rule, especially in names of places or organizations, for example:
 St Thomas' Hospital

With personal names that end in -s but are not spoken with an extra s: just add an apostrophe after the -s:
 The court dismissed Bridges' appeal.

Plural nouns that end in –s With a plural noun that already ends in -s: add an apostrophe after the s:
 The mansion was converted into a girls' school.

Plural nouns that do not end in –s With a plural noun that doesn't end in –s: add an apostrophe plus s:
The children's father came round to see me.
He employs 14 people at his men's clothing store.

Apostrophes showing omission
 An apostrophe can be used to show that letters or numbers have been omitted. Here are some examples of apostrophes that indicate missing letters:
I'm - short for I am
he'll - short for he will
she'd – short for she had or she would
pick 'n' mix - short for pick and mix
it's hot - short for it is hot
didn't - short for did not
 It also shows that numbers have been omitted, especially in dates, e.g. the Berlin Wall came down in the autumn of *'89* (short for 1989).

It's or its?
 These two words can cause a lot of confusion: many people are uncertain about whether or not to use an apostrophe. These are the rules to remember:

•its (without an apostrophe) means 'belonging to it':
The dog wagged its tail.
Each case is judged on its own merits.
•it's (with an apostrophe) means 'it is' or 'it has':
It's been a long day.
It's cold outside.
It's a comfortable car and it's got some great gadgets.

articles The words a, an, and the, which signal or introduce nouns. The definite article *the* refers to a particular item: the report. The indefinite articles *a* and *an* refer to a general item or one not already mentioned: an apple.

auxiliary verb A verb that combines with the main verb to show differences in tense, person, and voice. The most common auxiliaries are forms of *be*, *do*, and *have*. I *am* going; we *did* not go; they *have* gone.

case The form of a noun or pronoun that reflects its grammatical function in a sentence as subject (*they*), object (*them*), or possessor (*their*). She gave her employees a raise that pleased *them* greatly.

clause a clause that can form a complete sentence standing alone, having a subject and a predicate. *Moths swarm around a burning candle. While she was taking the test, Karen muttered to herself.*

colloquialism A word or expression appropriate to informal conversation but not usually suitable for academic or business writing. They wanted to get even (instead of they wanted to retaliate).

Colon There are three main uses of the colon:
- between two main clauses in cases where the second clause explains or follows from the first:

That is the secret of my extraordinary life: always do the unexpected.
It wasn't easy: to begin with, I had to find the right house.
- to introduce a list:

The price includes the following: travel to London, flight to Venice, hotel accommodation, and excursions.
The job calls for skills in the following areas: proofing, editing, and database administration.
- before a quotation, and sometimes before direct speech:

The headline read: 'Taxi Driver Battles Gangsters'.
They shouted: 'Our families are starving! We need land!'

Commas A comma marks a slight break between different parts of a sentence. Used properly, commas make the meaning of sentences clear by grouping and separating words, phrases, and clauses. Many people are uncertain about the use of commas, though, and often sprinkle them throughout their writing without knowing the basic rules.
Here are the main cases when you need to use a comma:
•in lists
•in direct speech
•to separate clauses
•to mark off certain parts of a sentence

compound sentence Two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction, a correlative conjunction, or a semicolon. Caesar conquered Gaul, but Alexander the Great conquered the world.

conjunction A word that joins words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. The coordinating conjunctions, and, but, or, nor, yet, so, for, join grammatically equivalent elements.

Correlative conjunctions (both, and; either, or; neither, nor) join the same kinds of elements.

contraction A shortened form of a word or group of words: can't for cannot; they're for they are.

dependent clause A group of words that includes a subject and verb but is subordinate to an independent clause in a sentence. Dependent clauses begin with either a subordinating conjunction, such as if, because, since, or a relative pronoun, such as who, which, that. When it gets dark, we'll find a restaurant that has music.

direct object A noun or pronoun that receives the action of a transitive verb. Pearson publishes books.

Ellipsis An ellipsis makes up for a missing piece of text, or allows for a pause in writing. An ellipses is usually three dots, with a space in between each . . .

gerund The -ing form of a verb that functions as a noun: Hiking is good exercise. She was praised for her playing.

indefinite pronoun A pronoun that refers to an unspecified person (*anybody*) or thing (*something*).

independent clause A group of words with a subject and verb that can stand alone as a sentence. Raccoons steal food.

indirect object A noun or pronoun that indicates to whom or for whom, to what or for what the action of a transitive verb is performed. I asked her a question. Ed gave the door a kick.

infinitive/split infinitive In the present tense, a verb phrase consisting of to followed by the base form of the verb (to write). A split infinitive occurs when one or more words separate to and the verb (to boldly go).

intransitive verb A verb that does not take a direct object. His nerve failed.

main clause An independent clause, which can stand alone as a grammatically complete sentence. Grammarians quibble.

modal auxiliaries Any of the verbs that combine with the main verb to express necessity (must), obligation (should), permission (may), probability (might), possibility (could), ability (can), or tentativeness (would). Mary might wash the car.

modifier A word or phrase that qualifies, describes, or limits the meaning of a word, phrase, or clause. Frayed ribbon, dancing flowers, worldly wisdom.

nominative pronoun A pronoun that functions as a subject or a subject complement: I, we, you, he, she, it, they, who.

noun A word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. Most nouns have a plural form and a possessive form. Carol; the park; the cup; democracy.

object The noun or pronoun that completes a prepositional phrase or the meaning of a transitive verb. (See also direct object, indirect object, and preposition.) Frost offered his audience a poetic *performance* they would likely never forget.

participle A verbal that functions as an adjective. Present participles end in -ing (brimming); past participles typically end in -d or -ed (injured) or -en (broken) but may appear in other forms (brought, been, gone).

phrase A group of related words that functions as a unit but lacks a subject, a verb, or both. Without the resources to continue.

possessive The case of nouns and pronouns that indicates ownership or possession (Harold's, ours, mine).

preposition A word that relates its object (a noun, pronoun, or -ing verb form) to another word in the sentence. She is the leader of our group. We opened the door by picking the lock. She went out the window.

principal verb The predicating verb in a main clause or sentence.

Possessive pronouns such as hers, its, and theirs.

proper noun The name of a particular person (Frank Sinatra), place (Boston), or thing (Moby Dick). Proper nouns are capitalized. Common nouns name classes of people (singers), places (cities), or things (books) and are not capitalized.

relative clause A clause introduced by a relative pronoun, such as who, which, that, or by a relative adverb, such as where, when, why.

relative pronoun A pronoun that connects a dependent clause to a main clause in a sentence: who, whom, whose, which, that, what, whoever, whomever, whichever, and whatever.

sentence fragment A group of words that is not grammatically a complete sentence but is punctuated as one: Because it mattered greatly.

Semi Colon The main task of the semicolon is to mark a break that is stronger than a comma but not as final as a full stop. It's used between two main clauses that balance each other and are too closely linked to be made into separate sentences, as in these two examples:
 The road runs through a beautiful wooded valley; the railway line follows it.
An art director searched North Africa; I went to the Canary Islands.

You can also use a semicolon as a stronger division in a sentence that already contains commas:

The study showed the following: 76% of surveyed firms monitor employee Web-surfing activities, with 65% blocking access to unauthorized Internet locations; over one-third of the firms monitor employee computer keystrokes; half reported storing and reviewing employee emails; 57% monitor employee telephone behaviour, including the inappropriate use of voicemail.

Speech:
Reported speech In reported speech, the actual words are not usually quoted directly. Usually, they are summarized or paraphrased and there are no special punctuation issues to take into account: *The 180 respondents said that the main reason for setting up in business was to be their own boss.*

Direct speech In direct speech, various punctuation conventions are used to separate the quoted words from the rest of the text: this allows a reader to follow what's going on. Here are the basic rules:

- •The words that are actually spoken should be enclosed in inverted commas: *'He's very clever, you know.'*

- Every time a new speaker says something, you should start a new paragraph: *'They think it's a more respectable job,' said Jo. 'I don't agree,' I replied.*

- There should be a comma, full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark at the end of a piece of speech. This is placed inside the closing inverted comma or commas. *'Can I come in?' he asked. 'Just a moment!' she shouted. 'You're right,' he said. 'I didn't expect to win.'*

•If direct speech comes after the information about who is speaking, you should use a comma to introduce the piece of speech, placed before the first inverted comma: Steve replied, 'No problem.'

•If the direct speech is broken up by information about who is speaking, you need a comma (or a question mark or exclamation mark) to end the first piece of speech and a full stop or another comma before the second piece (before the inverted comma or commas): *'You're right,' he said. 'It feels strange.' 'Thinking back,' she said, 'I didn't expect to win.' 'No!' he cried. 'You can't leave now!'*

subject The noun or pronoun that indicates what a sentence is about, and which the principal verb of a sentence elaborates. The new Steven Spielberg movie is a box office hit.

subordinate clause A clause dependent on the main clause in a sentence. *After we finish our work*, we will go out for dinner.

syntax The order or arrangement of words in a sentence. Syntax may exhibit parallelism (I came, I saw, I conquered), inversion (Whose woods these are I think I know), or other formal characteristics.

tense The time of a verb's action or state of being, such as past, present, or future. Saw, see, will see.

transitive verb A verb that requires a direct object to complete its meaning: They washed their new car. An intransitive verb does not require an object to complete its meaning: The audience laughed. Many verbs can be both: The wind blew furiously. My car blew a gasket.

verb A word or group of words that expresses the action or indicates the state of being of the subject. Verbs activate sentences.

verbal A verb form that functions in a sentence as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb rather than as a principal verb. Thinking can be fun. An embroidered handkerchief. (See also gerund, infinitive, and participle.)

voice The attribute of a verb that indicates whether its subject is active (Janet played the guitar) or passive (The guitar was played by Janet).

Finding the subject and the object
Ask who or what before the verb to find the subject
Ask who or what after the verb to find the object
e.g: Liz loves chocolate.
Liz is the subject, chocolate is the object.

Main Clause and Subordinate Clause
The main clause expresses a complete thought, and can stand as a sentence on its own. It must have a subject and a verb.

Subordinate clauses, which can't stand alone, have three main purposes in life. A subordinate clause can describe nouns and pronouns; describe verbs, adverbs, and adjectives; or at act as the subject or object of another clause. It may give your listener or reader more information about a noun or pronoun in the sentence. Here are some examples, with the subordinate clause in italic:

The book *that Michael wrote* is on the best seller list.

Grammar & Punctuation
Useful sites

http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/punctuation/punctuation-rules-help.html
http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/interactive/literacy2.htm
http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/
http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/ending-sentences-with-prepositions