SPaG Subject Knowledge

Section 1 - Word Types

Nouns: Nouns name a person, animal, place, thing or idea.

There are different types of nouns.

Type of Noun	Definition	Examples
abstract	name of something that can't be felt or touched	anger, love
collective	name for a group of things	flock, herd
common (ordinary)	name for an ordinary object or animal	table,
Proper	the name of a particular person, place or thing	Paris
uncountable	something that can't be counted, often used with words such as much or little bit	water

Adjectives: Adjectives describe nouns. They describe the quantity, quality, size, age, shape, colour, place of origin or purpose of a noun. E.g. The old triangular building.

Verbs: Verbs give an action or happening. Verbs tell you what has happened, is happening or will happen.

E.g. He jumped over the fence.

Adverbs: Adverbs are words or groups of words that tell you how, when or where the action happened. Lots of adverbs end in the letters –ly and

this is a really good way for children to spot them. E.g. quickly, cautiously...

But.... beware! Not all adverbs end in –ly. E.g. hard, far.

Determiners and Articles:

Determiners are used in front of nouns to indicate whether you are referring to something specific or something of a particular type.

Determiners are different to pronouns in that a determiner is always followed by a noun.

The definite and indefinite articles a/an/the are all determiners.

You use a specific determiner when people know exactly which thing(s) or person/people you are talking about.

The specific determiners are:

the definite article : *the*
demonstratives : *this, that, these, those*
possessives : *my, your, his, her, its, our, their*

Articles: Articles are a type of determiner. There are only three of them – a, an or the – and they come before a noun.

Pronouns: A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence. They are intended to avoid having to repeat the name of things.

E.g. his, her, it …

Connectives: Connectives link different ideas, phrases, sentences and paragraphs together.

E.g. because, although, and…

Prepositions: Prepositions show the position of things.

E.g. The bike was inside the shed, next to an old wheelbarrow and in front of a bench.

It is used also for the relationship between the object and the rest of the sentence.

E.g. He played football until it got dark.

Subject and Object

The subject is the person or thing doing the action.

The object is the person or thing affected by or receiving the action.

E.g. The cat walked on the carpet. The cat is the subject and the carpet is the object.

Section 2 – Sentences

Statements, Questions and Commands

Statements are sentences that tell someone something and end with a full stop. E.g. The boy stood up.

Questions are sentences that ask someone something and end with a question mark. E.g. Did the boy stand up?

Commands are sentences that order someone to do something and end (often) with an exclamation mark. E.g. Stand up!

Phrases and Clauses

Phrases: A phrase is a group of words that may have nouns and verbs but does not have a subject doing a verb.

E.g. some beautiful people

Clauses: A clause is a group of words that has a subject doing a verb.

E.g. because she liked picking flowers Kate played tennis

An independent (main) clause: can be a complete sentence by itself.

E.g. Kate played tennis She ate her tea

A subordinate (or dependent) clause: starts with a subordinating conjunction which means it doesn't make sense by itself.

E.g. when it is time to go home because she liked picking flowers

Complex Sentences:

A complex sentence is a sentence which has a main piece of information (which could be a sentence on its own – main or independent clause) and some extra information that includes a verb (which could not be a sentence on its own – the subordinate or dependent clause).

E.g. They had fish and chips after they watched the football match.

They had fish and chips – this is a sentence on its own.

after they watched the football match – this is not a sentence on its own.

If the main clause comes first then you don't need a comma. If you write the part that doesn't make sense on its own first, we do need a comma.

E.g. The bus crashed when it hit the ice.

When it hit the ice, the bus crashed.

Embedded Clauses

Embedded clauses are clauses that are in the middle of sentences. They are separated from the rest of the sentence, usually by commas.

To make a sentence with an embedded clause:

1. Write a simple sentence: The boy walked home.
2. Think about some extra information about the boy – e.g. he was very tired.
3. Put the extra information in the middle of the sentence with commas either side of it.

   The boy, who was very tired, walked home.

Adverbial Phrases

An adverbial is part of a sentence that tells us more about the verb (and can be more than one word). An adverb can be an adverbial.

E.g. Laura will finish **soon**. **Soon** is an adverb that tells us when Laura will finish.

Laura will finish **in a few minutes**. **In a few minutes** is an adverbial that tells us when Laura will finish.

Adverbials answer questions like:

	Examples
Where?	Tom hid the box **under the stairs.**
When?	Tom hid the box **before breakfast.**
How long?	Tom hid the box **for a week.**
How often?	Tom hid the box **every day.**
How?	Tom hid the box **by covering it with coats.**
Why?	Tom hid the box **so Lauren couldn't find it.**
With whom?	Tom hid the box **with Anne.**

a). Julie sat **with her legs crossed**.

b). **When it rained**, the children ran inside.

c). Claire knocked **because she wanted to come in**.

Subject and Verb Agreement

The subject is who or what the sentence is **about**.

The verb is what the subject is **doing.**

The subject and verb MUST agree.

If there is one subject, the verb must be singular.

If there is more than one subject, the verb must be plural.

E.g. The boys run quickly. The boy runs quickly.

Tenses

Verbs can be written in the past, present or future tense.

Complete the table below

Verb	Past	Present	Future
to sleep	slept	sleeping	to sleep
to think	thought	thinking	to think

Double Negatives:

The use of two negatives in a sentence is called a double negative. The two negatives cancel each other out, so the meaning is positive.

E.g. We didn't see nothing.

The two negatives in this sentence are **didn't** and **nothing**. If we didn't see nothing that means we must have seen something.

I and Me

These are words that refer to yourself. When you talk about yourself with another person it is tricky to know whether to use I or me.

E.g. You and I went skating – OR – You and me went skating.

To work out which to use, try the sentence just for yourself.

I went skating. Me went skating.

Therefore the correct sentence is: You and I went skating.

Speech

Speech marks are punctuation marks that show what somebody said.

4 Golden Rules

1. Put " " around what the speaker says.
2. A new speech sentence starts with a capital letter (even if it is in the middle of another sentence).
3. Separate what was said from the speaker with a comma unless there is already a ? or an !.
4. Start a new paragraph if a sentence has a new speaker saying something.

Direct and Indirect Speech

Direct speech shows exactly what somebody has said. This is shown with speech marks when written.

Indirect speech tells you what someone else said, thought or felt. It doesn't need speech marks.

When you change direct speech into indirect speech you might need to change: **pronouns, place and time expressions** and/or **tenses.**

You might also need to add in extra words such as: **that, if, whether.**

Formal and Informal Writing

Formal writing is impersonal and usually uses the third person.

Informal writing is personal and chatty.

	Formal	Informal
Uses chatty phrases such as **well, you know, like, anyway.**	X	✓
Use contractions.	X	✓
Uses more exclamation marks.	X	✓
Uses abbreviations.	X	✓
Uses mostly short, simple sentences.	X	✓
Uses complex sentences.	✓	X
Uses mainly the third person.	✓	X

Standard English is English that follows accepted rules of grammar and that many people believe to be 'correct'. It tends to follow the same rules in all situations and is very useful in formal situations.

TOP TIPS

- Make sure subjects and verbs agree.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Avoid idioms.
- Make sure tenses are correct.

Impersonal Writing

Impersonal writing avoids personal pronouns (I, he, she, we, you, our, us).

It avoids using emotional words to influence the reader.

E.g.

PERSONAL: Lots of people know that the tests are far too hard for children like us.

IMPERSONAL: It is generally believed that the tests are too hard.

To change from personal to impersonal:

- Look for the personal pronouns and take them out if there are any.
- Look for emotional words and take them out if there are any.

E.g.

I thought that the train ride was a total disaster.

It is thought that the train ride was disappointing.

Capital Letters

Capital letters are used in the following special cases:

- Proper nouns: names of people, nationalities, languages, countries, places, days, months, religions, religious and public holidays.
- To start a sentence.
- For the personal pronoun I.
- For the main words in titles.

Relative Clauses

We can use relative clauses to join two English sentences, or to give more information about something.

I bought a new car. It is very fast.
→ **I bought a new car that is very fast.**

She lives in New York. She likes living in New York.
→ **She lives in New York, which she likes.**

Defining and Non-defining

A **defining relative clause** tells which noun we are talking about:

- I like the woman who lives next door.
  (If I don't say 'who lives next door', then we don't know which woman I mean).

A **non-defining relative clause** gives us extra information about something. We don't need this information to understand the sentence.

- I live in London, which has some fantastic parks.
  (Everybody knows where London is, 'which has some fantastic parks' is extra information).

PUNCTUATION

Commas

These are the ways we use commas:

- to separate speech from the reader (if no other punctuation is used)
- to separate items in a list
- after a subordinate clause (starting the sentence) in a complex sentence

- before the words **and, or, but, yet** or **while** when they join two sentences. E.g. The exam is tomorrow, but I have an opticians appointment then.
- to separate extra information in the sentence (usually in pairs) E.g. Anna, during playtime, bumped her head.
- to separate the name or title of the person being directly addressed: E.g. Will you, Peter, go and hand out the books.

  Well done, Karen. NB: Important for marking!
- to separate a question from a statement:E.g.You will sing, won't you?

Apostrophes

There are two uses of the apostrophe.

To show omission: To show where a letter or letters are missed out of a word (contractions). E.g. can't = can not she's = she is

To show possession: To show that something belongs to someone or something. E.g. Amanda's key Mia's shoes. The boys' game.

Rules for Possession

1. If the word doesn't end in **s** then add **'s.**
2. If the word does end in **s** just add '.
3. EXCEPT you can add **'s** if you would say the double **s.** E.g. James's trainers.

Semi-colons

A semi-colon is used to separate two complete sentences that are very closely related but should not be joined with a colon.

E.g. In winter the snow was freezing cold; in summer the sun was blazing hot.

There needs to be a complete sentence both before and after the semi-colon, but don't use a capital letter for the second sentence.

A semi-colon can be used in the place of a connective.

E.g. Linda went to zumba; she really didn't want to.

Colons

Colons should be used in the following two ways.

1. After a full sentence before a list. E.g. I had to pack my school bag for the trip: my lunchbox, a waterproof coat and sun lotion.
2. To separate two sentences where the second sentence explains the first sentence. E.g. The book was useful: it told him everything he needed to know.

Hyphens

Hyphens are short dashes between two words.

Hyphens are used for	Examples
some compound words	mother-in-law, hang-glider
verbs made from two nouns	to ice-skate
compound adjectives	green-fingered, long-eared
adding a prefix to some words	re-examine
for clarity – to distinguish words	re-sign/resign
writing fractions and numbers less than 100 as words	one-sixth, forty-seven

Parenthesis

A parenthesis is an extra word or phrase that is put into a sentence. It can be used to:

- show what someone is thinking
- add extra information for the reader
- explain the meaning of a word
- emphasise a point

Parenthesises are usually written in brackets, between commas or between dashes.

E.g.

a). Adam (who is rather strange) collects plastic bottles.

b). Adam – who is rather strange – collects plastic bottles.

c). Adam, who is rather strange, collects plastic bottles.

Dashes and Brackets

Dashes and brackets perform similar functions. They are useful for separating off parts of a sentence which introduce subordinate information which could be omitted.

E.g. Three further companies - Capital Two, Easyspend and Quickmoney - said they would notify me in ten days.

Dashes also introduce afterthoughts, particularly those of a surprising or unexpected nature. Brackets cannot be used in this way.

E.g. Tom says that haggis is good for you – I'd rather not try it though!

I got 4 numbers on the lottery but lost my ticket – typical!

Ellipsis

An ellipsis is a set of three (only three) dots ...

There are three main ways of using ellipsis.

1. In formal writing when a word or words are missed out of a quote. E.g. The mayor said, "Our schools give the best education ..."
2. In informal writing to show a character trailing off in speech. E.g. "Perhaps they won't mind..." stammered Alex.
3. A pause for emphasis or thought. E.g. She looked...she waited...she crossed.

WORDS

Comparative and Superlative

The comparative compares two things and usually ends in –**er** or uses the word **more.**

The superlative compares more than two things and usually ends in –**est** or uses the word **most.**

Examples:

a). The red car is fast**er** than the blue car, but the blue car is **more** comfortable.

b). This school is the great**est** school in the world!

c). It is the **most** expensive camera I've ever used.

Homophones and Homonyms

Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelt differently.

E.g. see and sea. Write and right.

Homonyms are words that are spelt or sound the same but have different meanings.

E.g. fine (okay) and fine (owed money), club (place to dance) and club (large heavy object), rock (type of music) and rock (made of stone).

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. You can often make an antonym using a prefix (happy – unhappy). Other antonyms can be totally different words (real – artificial).

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same (or similar) meaning. Using synonyms avoids repetition and makes writing more interesting.

E.g. **Silent** – still, hushed, tranquil, peaceful, calm

Selecting Words Closest/Opposite in Meaning

Children will also have to select a word (from a choice of 3) that is closest or opposite in meaning. This is very difficult to prepare the children for as there is no way of knowing which words will come up. Generally it is just important that we use as wide a range of possible of vocabulary and foster a culture where children feel confident to ask if they do not understand what a word means.

Ranking Words

This is putting words in order according to their meaning.

E.g. talk, shout, whisper, call

Quietest to loudest would be: whisper, talk, call, shout.

Concision

Concision is being able to say everything you want to say in as few words as possible. Children will need a large vocabulary to do this.

Etymology

Etymology is the study of the origins of words. It looks at where words came from and how they have changed over time.

Children will not have to name derivations, but will have to write modern words related to the origin.

E.g.

Word root – aqua	Origin – Latin	Meaning - Water	Examples -

Idioms

Idioms are a group of words that do not mean exactly what they say. Its purpose is to convey meaning in a more colourful way.

E.g. It was raining cats and dogs.

The tickets cost an arm and a leg.

Please lend me a hand.

Figurative Language

Literally figurative language means descriptive writing. We use this to make our writing more expressive and interesting.

Simile – This says something is like something else using the key words 'like' or 'as'. E.g. It was as hot as the sun. She jumped like a frog.

Metaphor – This says something is something else. E.g. The fire was the sun, blazing through the night.

Onomatopoeia – A word that describes the sound it describes. E.g. The paper rustled. 'Pop!' went the balloon.

Alliteration – Alliteration is a literary device in which the same sound appears at the beginning of two or more consecutive words. E.g. Frank's photo fell in the forest.

SPELLING

Prefixes

A prefix is a group of letters placed at the start of a word. The prefix changes the meaning of the word. E.g. illegal, irrelevant, midnight.

Suffixes

A suffix is a group of letters placed at the end of a word. The suffix changes the meaning of the word. E.g. childish, greatness, collection.

Plurals

Plurals are nouns that name more than one of something.

Common ways to make plurals

Word Type	Making the plural	Examples	Exceptions
Most words	Add –**s** to the word	dogs, schools, houses	Lots – see below!
Words that end in – **s, -ss, -ch, -sh, -x, -z**	Add –**es** to the word	matches, pushes, boxes, losses, fizzes,	
Words that end in –**f**	Change the –**f** to –**v** and add –**es**	loaves, hooves, calves	roofs, dwarfs, chiefs
Words that end in –**y**	Change the –**y** to an –**i** and add –**es**	ladies, stories, ponies	Words that end in –**ey** (keys, donkeys), and some that end in –**ay (**days, trays).
Words that end with a consonant and –**o**	Add –**es**	tomatoes, volcanoes, potatoes	pianos, halos