

English department Third stage fifth lecture

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SYNTAX

Syntax is the study of how words are arranged and combined to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. It shows how each word functions and relates to other words in a sentence.

The Hierarchical Structure of a Sentence

A sentence is not just a line of words — it's a hierarchy made up of phrases. Each phrase has a head word, which determines its type.

Major phrase types

Example	Head Word	Phrase Type
<i>The tall boy</i>	Noun	Noun Phrase (NP)
<i>... eats an apple</i>	Verb	Verb Phrase (VP)
<i>... very beautiful</i>	Adjective	Adjective Phrase (AdjP)
<i>... quite slowly</i>	Adverb	Adverb Phrase (AdvP)
<i>... in the garden</i>	Preposition	Prepositional Phrase (PP)

A **Noun Phrase (NP)** is a group of words that has a **noun** as its **head** and functions as a **subject, object, or complement** in a sentence.

1. **The tall boy**

- The → Determiner
- tall → Adjective
- boy → Noun

2. **A cup of tea**

- A → Determiner
- cup → Noun (core)
- of tea → modifier

Definition of VP (Verb Phrase):

A **Verb Phrase (VP)** is a group of words that has a **verb** as its **head**, and it may include **auxiliary verbs, objects, complements, or adverbials**.

It expresses the **action** or **state** in the sentence.

1. eats an apple

- eats → Verb
- an apple → Object (NP)

2. runs quickly

- runs → Verb
- quickly → Adverb