



The noun phrase

Examples of the possible complexity of noun phrases

That girl is tall.

That girl was standing in the corner.

You waved to that girl when you entered.

That girl became angry because you waved to her.

That girl is Jane Hunt.

That tall girl standing in the corner who became angry because you waved to her when you entered is Jane Hunt.

Three components of NPs

a/ **The head**, around which the other components cluster and which dictates concord and other kinds of congruence with the rest of the sentence outside the noun phrase:

that tall girl standing x those tall girls standing

b/ **The premodification**, which comprises all the items placed before the head, namely determiners, adjectives and nouns:

some very expensive office furniture

c/ **The postmodification**, comprising all the items placed after the head, namely PPs, nonfinite and relative clauses:

*the chair by the wall,
a car which she bought recently*

Restrictive and nonrestrictive modification

restrictive - the head can be viewed as a member of a class which can be linguistically identified through the modification that has been supplied:

The girl who is in the corner is Jane Hunt.

nonrestrictive - the head can be viewed as unique or as a member of a class that has been independently identified; any modification given to such a head is additional information which is not essential for identifying the head:

Jane Hunt, who is in the corner, wants to meet you.

Postmodification

Restrictive relative clauses

The boy that/who is playing the piano.

The boy (who(m)/ that) we met.

The table that/which stands in the corner.

The table (which/ that) we admire.

Nonrestrictive relative clauses (Note: The loose nonrestrictive relationship is often semantically indistinguishable from coordination or adverbial subordination)

Then we met Barbara, who invited him to a party/and she invited him to a party.

He got lost on Snowdon, which he was exploring/while he was exploring it.

Sentential relative clauses

This type has as its antecedent not a NP but a whole clause or sentence or even sequence of sentences.

He admires Mrs Brown, which surprises me/, which I find strange.

Postmodification by nonfinite clauses

-ing participle clauses

The man who writes/is writing the messages is my friend.

The man writing the messages is my friend.

-ed participle clauses

The only car that will be repaired by that man is mine.

The only car repaired by that man is mine.

infinitive clauses

The next train which arrived/to arrive was from York.

The man for John to consult is Wilson. x The man to consult is Wilson.

Postmodification by PPs

A prepositional phrase is by far the commonest type of postmodification in English

Examples:

the road to Lincoln

a tree by a stream

this book on grammar

action in case of fire

Minor types of postmodification

These minor types are by adverb phrases, postposed adjectives, postposed ‘mode’ qualifiers:

the road back (which leads back)

something strange (the indefinite pronoun followed by adjective modification)

Lobster Newburg (a French model, confined to cuisine)

Premodification

Types of premodifying item: adjective, participle, -s genitive, noun, adverbial, sentence:

his delightful cottage

his completed cottage

his fisherman's cottage

his country cottage

his far-away cottage

his pop-down-for-the-weekend cottage

Multiple premodification

With single head:

his last brilliant book

With multiple head:

the new table and chairs

With modified modifier:

his really quite unbelievable delightful cottage

Discontinuous modification

It is not uncommon for a NP to be interrupted by other items of clause structure, e.g.

You'll meet a man tomorrow carrying a heavy parcel.

I had a nice glass of beer but in an ugly glass.

different production figures from those given earlier

Apposition

Two or more NPs are in apposition when they have identity of reference. The appositives may be juxtaposed, separated, the apposition may be indicated by a conjunction or by forms such as *that is* and *namely*, e.g.

A professional singer, someone trained in Paris, had been engaged for the concert.

His birthday present lay on the table, a book on history, the work of his professor.

Linguistics or the study of language attracts many students.

The outcome, that is her re-election, was a complete surprise.

Appositive clauses

The appositive clause resembles the relative clause in being **capable of introduction by *that***, and in distinguishing between **restrictive and nonrestrictive**. It differs in that the particle *that* **is not an element in the clause structure** (e.g. S, O) as it must be in a relative clause, and **the head of the NP** must be **an abstract noun** such as *fact*, *proposition*, *reply*, *remark*, *answer*, and the like.

The belief that no one is infallible is well-founded.

A message that he would be late arrived by special delivery.

This fact, that that is obligatory, should be easy to remember.

Compare the same clause used in different functions

I have some secrets that I hide from the world.

The idea, that I hide from the world, is nonsense.

Some people say that I hide from the world.

That I hide from the world is my secret.