# A Comprehensive English Grammar

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BOOK 2

'What is happening to the car?' We are so little concerned with who is cleaning it that quite often we should omit all reference to the agent (i.e. the person or thing that performs the action) and simply say: 'The car is being cleaned.' This is particularly the case where the agent is vague or unimportant or unknown. So the passive voice is often used in English where, for example, on is used in French or man in German with the active voice. Thus:

'Ici on parle français', or:

'Hier spricht man deutsch', would be in English:

'French (is) spoken here.'

In sentences like this, the agent with by is always omitted; and in many other cases, where the active construction is changed to the passive, it is better to omit the agent. For example, in turning the following sentence from active voice to passive voice:

People in Brazil speak Portuguese.

the answer should be:

Portuguese is spoken in Brazil. NOT:

Portuguese is spoken in Brazil by people.

The following examples will illustrate this point further:

#### Active

No one has used that door for twenty years.

Readers must not take away books in the Reference Library.

Someone stole my watch this morning.

We use pure butter in these cakes.

They make cotton goods in Lancashire.

Have you fed the chickens yet?

# Passive

That door hasn't been used for twenty years.

Books in the Reference Library must not be taken away.

My watch was stolen this morning.

Pure butter is used in these cakes.

Cotton goods are made in Lancashire.

Have the chickens been fed yet?

Since, in the change from active to passive voice, the subject of the passive construction is formed by the object of the active one, only transitive verbs can be used in the passive voice. So verbs of Incomplete Predication, e.g. seem, be, become, etc., can never be used in the passive; e.g. He became King could never have a passive form such as A king was become by him. But certain intransitive verbs can be made into transitive ones by the addition of a preposition. These verbs can be used in the passive voice, e.g.

His plan was laughed at by everyone who heard it.

That is a famous bed; it was slept in by Queen Elizabeth I.

The children will be cared for while she is away.

I believe the house was deliberately set fire to.

Such success was never dreamed of when we first started.

Though all transitive verbs can, theoretically, be made passive, there are cases where, in practice, the passive would not be used; for example:

He had a good breakfast before he went to work

would not be used passively as:

A good breakfast was had by him . . .

Some verbs, such as give, tell, show, lend, get, write, pay, sell, buy, bring, make, fetch, promise, teach, take two objects, one usually standing for a person, the other for a thing. The word for the person is the indirect object and is the first of the two objects; theword for the thing is the direct object, e.g. He sold us (indirect) his house (direct). Here, us means 'to us'. His mother made Tom (indirect) a cake. Here Tom = 'for Tom'. Further examples:

He told me a story. I showed him my new car. He gave me some good advice. You owe him fifty pence. She taught him French. They promised Henry a bicycle for his birthday.

If a sentence containing two objects is expressed in the passive voice, either of those objects may become the subject, though it is perhaps more usual to make the personal object the subject of the passive voice. *Examples*:

<sup>1</sup> The verb give may have an indirect object standing for a thing, e.g. As the ball came to him he gave it a kick. Give this matter your full attention.

#### Active

# The Prime Minister offered him a post in the Cabinet.

They awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951.

#### Passive

- (1) He was offered a post in the Cabinet.
- (2) A post in the Cabinet was offered him.
- (1) He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951.
- (2) The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded him in 1951.

Note in the above examples the omission of the agent with by. The construction by + agent would be unnatural and unnecessary in sentences like these, where the 'doer' is either clear from the meaning of the sentence, or is not of interest to us.

#### EXERCISES

I Turn the following sentences into the passive voice:

(a)

(1) The waitress brings the coffee. (2) The waitress is bringing the coffee. (3) The waitress brought the coffee. (4) The waitress has brought the coffee. (5) The waitress was bringing the coffee. (6) The waitress had brought the coffee. (7) The waitress will bring the coffee. (8) I shall bring the coffee. (9) The waitress will have brought the coffee. (10) I shall have brought the coffee.

(b)

(1) I finished my work at about five o'clock. (2) We use your books in our class. (3) They gave him a very handsome present when he retired. (4) We opened the boxes and took out the cigarettes. (5) Do people speak English all over the world? (6) Somebody built this house in 1585. (7) You must answer all the questions on the paper. (8) They blamed me for something that I hadn't done. (9) They are sending Mr. Brown abroad on business. (10) People will forget the whole incident after a few weeks. (11) He took them for a drive in the new car. (12) People are talking about him everywhere. (13) I told him to write to that address. (14) You must plan your work carefully. (15) Someone gave me a pair of gloves for Christmas. (16) They told me you had gone

to Paris. (17) It's time someone told him what is wrong. (18) They gave me a ticket for Newtown instead of for Newton. (19) They didn't tell me all the details of the case. (20) They took him to hospital in an ambulance.

II Turn the following sentences into the passive voice:

(1) The English people greatly love the Queen. (2) Did the Customs Officers search your luggage very carefully? (3) When the parade was over, the commanding officer dismissed the troops. (4) The police denied him entry to the country. (5) Somebody has taken all my books.

(6) Scotland Yard officers are investigating the crime. (7) They cannot trace the criminal. (8) They shall not treat me as if I were a baby. (9) The council have approved the plans for the building but we haven't raised the money. (10) The garage mechanic has washed and greased your car.

III Indicate which word in each of the following sentences is the direct object and then write the sentences in the passive voice. In each sentence two forms are possible. (I) The manager offered him the choice of two posts in the firm. (2) The school governors gave her a scholarship to the University. (3) We cannot award him good marks on the work he has done. (4) Their uncle left them all his property when he died. (5) They gave you the present that was intended for your father.

IV In the following sentences put all the finite verbs in the passive voice:

(1) He promised you that they would meet you at the station. (2) Certainly we shall count on you to devote yourself to the work we are giving you to do. (3) It astonished us to hear that you had not received our letter. (4) They had only lived in that house for three weeks when fire destroyed it. (5) His failure bitterly disappointed his parents, especially as they had been counting on his success.

#### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# VERBS: (5) MOOD

Mood is a grammatical term used to denote the forms that a verb takes to show what work it is doing (e.g. expressing a statement, a command, a wish, etc.), and the manner in which

the action or state is thought of by the speaker.

There are three moods, INDICATIVE, IMPERATIVE, SUBJUNCTIVE. The one that is by far the most commonly used is the *Indicative*. This is the mood used to make statements and ask questions. All the tenses discussed in pages 157 to 180 are in the Indicative Mood.

#### THE IMPERATIVE MOOD

The Imperative mood has the same form, in the second Person singular and plural, as the infinitive without to. In the first and third persons it is preceded by let and an accusative, e.g. 'Let's' go the the cinema.' 'I can't see him just now; let him wait.' It is used to give orders or commands or to make requests, e.g. 'Open your books.' 'Don't make so much noise.' 'Pass the salt, please.' The 'request' may be:

- (I) An ENTREATY, e.g.
  - 'Spare a penny, sir, for a starving man.'
    'Help! Help! I'm drowning.'
- (2) An INSTRUCTION:

'To get to the Shakespeare Theatre, turn to the right at the river and keep straight on.'

(3) An invitation:

'Come inside and meet my wife.'

'Have a cigarette.'

(4) A SUGGESTION:

'Where can I find Mr. Smith?' 'I'm not sure. Try his office or ring up his house.'

1 = let us.

(5) A CONDITION, e.g.

Do that again and I'll call a policeman!1

Suppose you had a million pounds, how would you spend the money?

The subject (which is always in the second person) is not usually expressed with the imperative. If it is expressed (usually in negative sentences), it may be in order to add emphasis.

Don't you dare to say I am not telling the truth.

I've been answering questions all day. Don't you start now.

If the subject is put in an affirmative sentence it is usually to express contrast, e.g.

You take that piece and I'll take this.

You ask the first question and I'll ask the next one.

In conversation the imperative is often used to express a wish, e.g.

Have a good holiday! Enjoy yourself and come back quite well again.

# THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

There are three Subjunctive forms of the verb: the Present Subjunctive, the Past Subjunctive and the Past Perfect Sub-

junctive.

THE PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE of all verbs other than the verb to be is identical with the Simple Present Tense Indicative, except that the third person singular form is the same as in all the other persons (i.e. without the -s ending). The Present Subjunctive form of to be is be for all persons.

THE PAST SUBJUNCTIVE is identical with the Simple Past Tense Indicative, except that the verb to be has were for

all persons.

THE PAST PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE is identical in form with

the Past Perfect Indicative.

The subjunctive forms are used in a small number of constructions; the constructions with the Present Subjunctive tend to be rather literary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See also Conditional Clauses, pages 347-51.

## USES OF THE PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE

The Present Subjunctive is used:

(I) to express a wish or a prayer, e.g.

God save the Queen.

Heaven forbid that . . .

Heaven help us.

Be that as it may . . .

'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done . . .'

A wish can also be expressed by may (Past Tense might) -- infinitive, e.g.

May you be happy all your life.

They prayed that he might soon be well again.

(2) after verbs expressing a will or wish for the future, and after verbs like *propose*, *suggest*, etc. This is chiefly in very formal English and especially in legal English. *Examples*:

It is our wish that he do what he pleases.

She urged that he write and accept the post.

I propose that the Secretary's resignation be accepted.

The King ordered that the man be released.

(3) occasionally in adverbial clauses of concession or condition, e.g.

Though the whole world condemn him, I will still believe in him.

This, if the news be true, is a very serious matter.

'Murder, though it have no tongue, will speak

With most miraculous organ.'1

In uses (2) and (3) the subjunctive, is often replaced by the subjunctive equivalent should + the infinitive, e.g.

It is our wish that he should do what he pleases.

Though the whole world should condemn him, I will still believe in him.

If we should fail in this, we are ruined.

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, Hamlet.

#### USES OF THE PAST SUBJUNCTIVE

The Past Subjunctive is used:

(1) In conditional clauses implying a negative, or in clauses in which the condition is combined with improbability or unreality, e.g.

If I were you, I should accept the offer.

If he were really interested in buying the property, he would have made an offer before now.

What would you say if I asked you to join us for a holiday?

(2) After such expressions as: 'I wish (that)...', 'Suppose (that)...', 'I had rather (that)...', 'as if...', 'It's (high) time (that)...'. Examples:

I wish I were as handsome as he is.

I wish he visited us more often.

Suppose (that) the teacher caught us wasting time.

I had rather (that) you told him than (that) I did.

He ran as if his life depended on it.

It is (high) time I went home.

It will be noted that except in the case of *to be*, verbs in these expressions could be considered as being in the Simple Past Tense.

Notice that the PAST SUBJUNCTIVE is usually concerned with PRESENT time, e.g. It's a lovely day; I wish I were at the seaside (NOW).

To speak of PAST time the PAST PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE is used, e.g. It was a lovely day yesterday; I wish I had been at the seaside then. (See also Conditional sentences, pp. 347-51.)

#### EXERCISES

I Name the moods of the verbs in the following sentences:
(1) Keep straight on until you come to the theatre and then turn left. (2) We should have gone for a walk today if the weather had been fine. (3) Come and have a drink.
(4) Heaven help the sailors on a night like this. (5) It is

 $<sup>^1</sup>$  But after 'It's time that', was not were in the first and third person singular would be usual, e.g. It's time that I was going.

time we left for the airport. (6) Don't you touch that or you'll break it. (7) Did you enjoy his singing this evening? (8) Have a good time at the party. (9) If I were in his place, I should accept their offer. (10) I suggest that he be nominated as Chairman.

- II Write five sentences in which the verbs are in the subjunctive mood.
- III Name the moods of the verbs in the following sentences:
  - (1) Let us go to the theatre this evening, shall we?
  - (2) What shall we do, supposing there are no seats left?
    (3) It was ordered that no smoking be allowed in the
  - library. (4) If you did that, you would be very sorry afterwards. (5) Will you have a little more meat, Mr. X?

#### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# VERBS: (6) THE NON-FINITES

The non-finites are the Infinitive, the Participles and the Gerund.

# THE INFINITIVE

This is the 'dictionary form' of the verb, i.e. the form under which a verb appears in the dictionary. It expresses the notion of the verb in its general sense, not as it applies to any particular subject. It is called 'infinitive' because its form is not limited (Latin finis = limit), as a finite verb is, by the number and person of its subject. There are four forms of the Infinitive:

	Simple	Perfect	
Active	(to) write	(to) have written	
Passive	(to) be written	(to) have been written	

The infinitive is usually, but not always, preceded by to, e.g.

He wants to learn English.

'To err is human, to forgive divine.' (Alexander Pope)

Let me tell you a story.

I saw him take the money.

The infinitive without to is sometimes called the 'plain' or 'bare' infinitive.

# THE PLAIN INFINITIVE (WITHOUT -to) IS USED:

I. after the special finites can (could), do (did), may (might), shall (should), will (would), must, need, dare, e.g.

He can speak French. Did you hear a noise? I might go. We shall meet him. I will help you. You must come with us. You needn't go yet. I daren't leave him. But the infinitive with to is used:

(a) after the special finites ought and used, e.g.

You ought to go. I used to live there.

(b) with do, need and dare when they are used not as special finites but as full verbs, e.g.

I did it to please you. You don't need to go yet.

He won't clare to disobey his teacher.

(c) with be and have when they are used to express commands, compulsion, etc., e.g.

You are to go to the Headmaster's room at once.

I have to be in my office by 9 o'clock.

2, after the Verbs of Perception: see, hear, feel, etc. (see also p. 169), and after make and let, e.g.

She saw him take the money.

I heard her play the piano.

He felt his blood run cold and his flesh creep.

The teacher made him write out the exercise again.

Don't make me laugh.

I will let you use my bicycle

Let's all go to the cinema.

But if these verbs are used in the passive voice, the infinitive takes to, e.g.

He was heard to cry.

They had been made to work.

He was seen to take the money.

The verb help sometimes, and generally in American English, is followed by the infinitive without to, e.g.

He helped me.(to) compose the letter.

Will you help me (to) clean the car?

3. after had better, had (would) rather, had (would) sooner, need hardly, cannot but, e.g.

You had better tell him the truth. I had (would) rather not see him. I'd sooner take a taxi than walk. I need hardly tell you how serious the matter is. I cannot but (== cannot do anything except) agree to his terms.

THE INFINITIVE WITH to IS USED in all other cases,

# THE PARTICLE to WITHOUT THE INFINITIVE

There are occasions when the particle to is used without the infinitive verb. This construction (omission of the infinitive verb) occurs when the to refers to a verb that has previously been used and that, if expressed, would be an infinitive with to, e.g.

I shall go if I want to (go).

He won't work harder than he needs to (work).

He would like to come but he's afraid he won't be able to (come).

If you don't know the answer, you ought to (know it).

'Will you come to dinner with me?' 'I should love to (come).'

## FUNCTIONS OF THE INFINITIVE

- I. The infinitive can act as a noun. Thus, it may be:
- (a) The SUBJECT of a sentence, e.g.

To act like that is childish.

To know all about English is one thing; to know English is quite another.

(b) The COMPLEMENT of a verb, e.g.

They are to be married soon.

To live like this is to enjoy life.

This house is to let.

How do you think I am to answer the letter?

What I like is to swim in the sea and then to lie on the warm sand.

(c) The OBJECT of a verb, e.g.

I want to know the answer.

He must learn to work hard and to save money.

'Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark.' (Francis Bacon)

I should like to have been told the result earlier.

There is a construction in which the infinitive together with a noun or pronoun (in the objective case) makes a close group that forms the object of a verb. This is called the ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE construction. *Examples*:

	Accusative	Infinitive	
He helped I made	me him	to dig do	my garden it
They let John asked	us him	go to write	to you
I watched I have never known	her	to behave	into the room so badly before
He couldn't bear	her	to be	unhappy

2. The infinitive may have an adverbial function, generally of purpose or result, e.g.

I went there to see him.

Mary has gone to get some fruit.

He is working late to make up for his absence yesterday.

I have come to learn English.

He was lucky enough to win the prize.

You should eat to live, not live to eat.

Help yourself to the cake; it is there to be eaten.

'And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.'

(Goldsmith, Deserted Village)

It may have an adjectival function and qualify a noun or an indefinite pronoun, e.g.

That is not the way to speak to your uncle. (qualifying way) Look at the number of shops to let. (qualifying shops)

Alexander the Great wept because he had no more worlds

to conquer. (qualifying worlds)

That was a silly thing to do.

He wore a pale blue shirt and a tie to match.

He gave me something to eat.

They have nothing to do.

Is there anyone to take care of these children? The questions to be answered and on page 40.

4. It is used with adjectives expressing emotion or desire, e.g.

I was very glad to see you.

He is happy/delighted/content/to be with us.

George was anxious/eager/to get home.

I am very pleased to have been of help.

It is used also with some other adjectives, e.g. fit, able etc:

These shoes are not fit to wear.

Tom isn't able to go to the party.

Richard is sure to come; he'll be the first to come and last to go away.

Other adjectives that can take this construction are:

afraid, ready, worthy, easy, hard, certain, uscless, possible, right, (un)able, wrong, etc.

Some adverbs also take this construction, e.g. far, best:

He knows how far to go.

She explained how best to cook the meat.

5. The infinitive can be used in 'absolute' constructions such as:

To tell you the truth, I don't know what the answer is.

To hear him talk, you would think he was a millionaire.

To cut a long story short . . .

To continue with what I was saying . . .

6. It is used after know and certain other verbs with interrogative words (see patterns on pages 396-7, 398), e.g.

I don't know how to tell you.

She knows where to find the key.

You will soon learn when to use that construction.

Show him how to do the exercise.

NOTE: The verb know must have one of the words how, when after it when a simple infinitive follows it. Such a sentence as:

'He knows to speak English' is wrong.

But know without one of these words is possible with not, e.g.

He knows not to speak (= that he must not speak) when the Headmaster is speaking.

7. It is sometimes used in exclamatory sentences, or in sentences expressing a wish unlikely to be realized, e.g.

To think he knew about it all the time!

Oh! to be young again.

'Oh! to be in England

Now that April's there.' (Browning, Home Thoughts from Abroad)

# THE 'SPLIT INFINITIVE'

Some grammarians condemn the use of the 'split infinitive' i.e. the placing of a word or words between the to and the verb. e.g. 'to quickly agree', 'to really understand'. But the split infinitive dates back to the thirteenth century and can be found in the work of many famous authors.

. Fowler says: 'A split infinitive, though not desirable in itself, is preferable to either of two things, to real ambiguity or to

patent artificiality.' He quotes with approval:

'Our object is to further cement trade relations.'

'This will tend to firmly establish good relations between Capital and Labour.'

Jespersen,<sup>2</sup> following Fowler, adds further examples of which he approves:

He likes to half close his eyes.

He was too ill to really carry out his duty.

The best guidance, perhaps, is: 'Don't use a split infinitive unless you have a good reason for doing so.'

#### EXERCISES

- I Pick out the infinitives and describe the function of each in the following sentences:
  - (1) To complete that book in three months was a great achievement. (2) That seems hard to do but is less difficult than it looks. (3) Strain every nerve to succeed.
  - (4) Why did you try to persuade him to come with us? (5) It is easy to criticize. (6) To climb Everest seemed an
  - impossible task. (7) Will you teach me to play tennis? (8) I saw him run the mile in four minutes. (9) The dog
- wants something to eat. (10) We are to have a holiday

<sup>1</sup> Modern English Usage.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Essentials of English Grammar.

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tomorrow. (11) What do you think is the right thing to do? (12) I tremble to think what your father will say. (13) The men have come to take down the tree. (14) She must do as she is told. (15) He made me tell him the whole story.

II (a) Construct sentences each containing an infinitive and using one of the following as the finite verb in each sentence:

want, see, must, let, hope, ought, hear, intend, dare, like, had rather, do; help, need, need hardly.

- (b) Give five sentences each containing a Perfect Infinitive.
- III Complete the following so as to make complete sentences:
  - (I) if he wishes to.
  - (2) whether I shall be able to.
  - (3) —— faster than he needs to.
  - (4) I shall be glad to.
  - (5) —— you certainly ought to.

What characteristic of the infinitive do these sentences illustrate?

- IV Construct five sentences, each one using one of the following adjectives plus the Infinitive of a verb: difficult, impossible, correct, unfit, afraid, sure.
  - V Define the function of the infinitive in each of the following sentences after you have completed the sentences:
    - To speak plainly ——. (2) To be brief ----.
    - (3) just how fast to go.
    - (4) how to climb the stairs.

    - (5) Oh to be young ———.
  - VI Make a sentence, containing what you consider to be a permissible split infinitive.

# THE PARTICIPLES

There are two participles, the Present Participle and the Past Participle.1 The present participle ends in -ing, the past

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'present' and 'past' here may be misleading. The 'past' participles in such phrases as 'a distinguished scientist', 'a crowded train', 'spoken English' do not refer necessarily to an action or state in the past; nor does the present participle in 'a charming woman', 'an interesting book' signify any time at all. It is, however, convenient -now that the reader has been warned -to retain the usual terminology.