Grammatical Building Blocks: Terms, Functions and Examples

Conventional Term	Functional Role	Role in Syntactic (Sentence) Structures	Examples
Noun	Names *who* or *what* – the 'namer'	Subject	The **plant** grew.
		Direct object	He watered the **plant**.
		Indirect object	She gave the **plant** some water.
		Object of preposition	Bees buzzed around the **plant**.
		Predicate nominative	A cactus is a **plant**.
Adjective	Expands the namer – • *how many?* (e.g., **ten**) • *what kind?* (e.g., **tall**) • *which one?* (e.g., **with prickly spines**)	Describes a noun as part of a • Complete subject	**Ten tall** cacti **with prickly spines** grew in the desert.
		• Direct object	The bird nested in the **tall** cactus.
		• Predicate adjective	The cactus is **prickly**.

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Pronoun	Replaces and refers to nouns	Subject	**Cactus** bloom. **They** attract birds.
	• Subjective	Predicate nominative	The **gardener** is **you**.
	• Objective	Direct object	The gardener watered the **cactus**. The gardener watered **it**.
		Indirect object	The gardener gave the **cactus** some water. The gardener gave **it** some water.
		Object of preposition	Birds nested on the **cactus**. Birds nested on **it**.
	• Relative	Introduce a dependent clause	The cactus **that** bloomed attracted many birds.
Verb	Tells the action — *Did what?* Links the subject to a word or phrase in the predicate — *Is what?*	Predicate	The plant **grew**. A cactus **is** a desert plant. That cactus ***is*** prickly.

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Adverb	Expands the action — • *where?* (e.g., **across the desert**) • *when?* (e.g., **after the thunderstorm**) • *how?* (e.g., **suddenly**) • *why?* (e.g., **due to the rain**)	Part of the complete predicate	**After the thunderstorm**, the cactus bloomed **suddenly across the desert due to the rain**.
Preposition	Signals relationship of nouns to other nouns or verbs	Part of a phrase	cactus ***with*** sharp needles grew ***in*** the desert
Conjunction	Joins words, phrases, or clauses • Coordinating	Joins (compounds) sentence parts in equal roles	
		• Subjects	**Birds and insects** help plants.
		• Predicates	Birds **pollinate and scatter** plant seeds.
		• Sentences	**Insects pollinate plants *and* birds scatter seeds**.
	• Subordinating	Joins clauses in *subordinating* roles to create complex sentences	**When the rain fell**, the cactus bloomed.
Interjection	Expresses emotion		**WOW!** **Look at the desert in bloom!**

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