ENGLISH GRAMMAR and FUNCTIONS

by a
NON-NATIVE
for the
NON-NATIVE

Vladimir Skenderoff

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(by a non-native, for the non-native)

Why this book, Why listen to me, Who is it for?

There are so many books dealing with English Grammar at Amazon, there is so much free information about English Grammar on the Internet, every single grammar-related question has been answered 100 times over.

So, why this book?

The answer to that question is also the answer to the question of "Why listen to me?" – virtually all English Grammar books are written by native speakers of English. The way native and non-native speakers learn grammar is diametrically opposite – native speakers learn *subconsciously*, but on the other hand non-native speakers learn *consciously*. Most Grammar books on the market do a good job making the grammar easy to understand, but not a good job making the grammar easy to remember and we all know that

Understand doesn't mean Remember.

Non-native speakers understand the rules of English grammar, but can't use them in a sentence, use quickly and correctly in a real-life situation. What makes my book different is that it is written by a non-native speaker of English, from the viewpoint of someone who has consciously studied English grammar and is very much aware of how non-native speakers perceive and produce grammar.

BY A NON-NATIVE
My name is Vladimir and I was born and raised in Bulgaria, a small country in Eastern Europe. Growing up behind the Iron Curtain I had very limited access to English books, music, movies or western culture of any kind – think North Korea.

- I started learning English seriously at the age of 27.

- I started teaching the language 3 years later and so far have taught over 13,000 individual lessons to more than 1,300 people.

I have a unique experience as both an adult learner and teacher of the English language. Everything in this book is practical and it is tried and tested. It's not just about what works in theory, it's mainly about what works in practice.

I have a Ph.D. but it's not in linguistics. I speak 4 languages but I don't consider myself a linguist, let alone a polyglot. I am not a human dictionary either, I don't claim to know every word in the Oxford Dictionary. I consider myself a virtually native speaker of the English language and an expert on how to learn English, able to answer any grammar-related question. What you are holding in your hands is the proof of that.

FOR THE NON-NATIVE

This book is for <u>all learners of English</u> – elementary, intermediate and advanced. The grammar covered accounts for 99% of all grammar used by non-native speakers of English.

This book is also for <u>language teachers</u> – non-native and native alike. My unique take on English grammar will most certainly prove invaluable to fellow English teachers.

Thank you very much for buying and reading my book and I sincerely hope it will be of value to you.

Using the book

Although this book is sold as a standalone textbook, it is best used as supplementary material to my first book Virtually Native. Grammar is not something that should be studied in isolation, grammar is an integral part of one's overall approach to language and I've laid out my approach/method of learning English in my first book.

Unlike most grammar textbooks, this book is best read in order from beginning to end. The material is ordered according to difficulty, and should not therefore be worked through randomly.

Like most grammar textbooks, this book comes with plenty of example sentences to better illustrate the various grammatical rules. You need to VISUALIZE, PERSONALIZE and HARMONIZE each of these example sentences (steps 6, 7 +1 of Virtually Native).

n = noun
v = verb
adj = adjective
sb = somebody
sth = something

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Word classes

One of the most common mistakes people make is to learn individual words, and then they read grammar textbooks to figure out how to connect those same words. Language learners have this dualistic approach to language acquisition – Vocabulary and Grammar as two separate parts of the language. We should never learn individual words, we should always learn words in combination with other words and in a sentence.

Never learn individual words!

Having said that, we will kick off with an overview of the 4 main word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Nouns

All vocabulary learning starts with nouns, they are the building blocks of any language. The top 20 most common English nouns are: time, year, people, way, day, thing, man, world, life, hand, part, child, eye, woman, place, work, week, school, family, country

Nouns are divided into *countable* and *uncountable*.

Countable nouns are used with A and with MANY and FEW (followed by *cymbals*):

How *many* time*s* a year do you travel by plane? Only a *few* time*s* a year.
There is an egg in the fridge.

Get into the habit of saying A/AN before countable nouns (extra syllable/beat): a person, a year, a thing, an egg, etc.

We form the plural by adding *S*:
a year – years
an ear – ears
a day – days
a thing – things

or *es* if the noun ends in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*:
a bus – buses
a dish – dishes
a watch – watches
a box – boxes

Cymbals

To me, the added *S* has never been about grammar but always about sound (Virtually Native). I don't think about grammar, I hear *cymbals*.

MANY and FEW are followed by cymbals – *S* sound:
  Many …s – many friends/cars/countries, etc.
  A few …s – a few pictures/cities, etc.

For words ending in *s, sh, ch, x* there are double cymbals /siz/:
  Many …es – many losses/churches/foxes, etc.

But of course there are some noteworthy exceptions:
  Many people/children/women/men etc.

  a person – people (*persons* is also correct)
  a man – men
  a woman – women
  a child – children
  1 tooth – teeth
  1 foot – feet

Uncountable nouns are used without a/an and with MUCH and LITTLE (not followed by *cymbals*):

How much time do we have before the plane leaves? We don't have much time.

There is milk in the fridge.

We can use SOME and A LOT OF with both countable and uncountable nouns when making *positive sentences*:

There are some/a lot of eggs in the fridge.
There is some/a lot of milk in the fridge.

We can use ANY with both countable and uncountable nouns when making *negative sentences* as well as *questions*:

There aren't any eggs in the fridge.
Is there any milk in the fridge?

A vs THE

A and THE is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar and especially for language learners from Asia and Eastern Europe.

A/AN is called the "indefinite article"
THE is called the "definite article"

Most West European languages (German, French, Spanish, etc.) make a distinction between *any one* and *one particular*. However, Asian and most East European learners of English struggle to get a good grasp of that concept because Asian and most Slavic languages, with the exception of Bulgarian, don't make that distinction. Therefore, we will start by defining that concept. There is a way to explain the difference between A (any one) and THE (one particular) and it involves asking for directions.

What is the most common question when you ask for directions in your native language? Make sure you answer that question before continuing with the book.

Naturally, the most common way to ask for directions is with the question word WHERE:
- Where is …?

I believe every language in the world has this question.

What is another common way to ask for directions in your native language? … In English the second most common question about directions is:
- Is there … around here?

I believe most languages have the second question too – please translate it in your native language.

What is the difference between:
- Where is …?
- Is there … around here?

Translate them into your mother tongue and try to imagine using them in a real-life situation.
- Imagine you are on vacation in New York and you are looking for Times Square … which question would you choose? Which question would you choose in your native language and why?
- Next, imagine you are looking for a McDonald's restaurant, which question would you choose in your native language and why? Make sure you answer both questions before proceeding with the book.

In English we say:
Where is Times Square?
Is there a McDonald's (restaurant) around here?

"Where is …?" is used when asking about **one specific** place, **only one in the world**.

"Is there … around here?" is used when asking about **any** place, **one of many**, not only one in the world.

Is it the same in your native language?

Where is… is never followed by A, often followed by THE …?
Where is the Empire State Building?
Where is the Eiffel Tower?
Where is Tokyo Tower? (~~the~~)
Where is Times Square? (~~the~~)
Where is the nearest McDonald's?
Where is the German embassy in Seoul?
Where is the head office of Citibank?

Is there… is never followed by THE, always followed by A/AN …*around*/*near here*?

Is there a restroom around here?
Is there a Starbucks(coffee shop) near here?
Is there an embassy of an EU country nearby?
Is there a Citibank around here?
Is there a bank around here?

$$A = 1$$

In English, as well as most other European languages, we need a number. Fluent speakers of English are obsessed with counting, we always need to say **How many**:

I have 1 car.
There are 2 girls waiting for you.
He was 5 minutes late.

but instead of:

1 we usually say A
2 we say "a couple of"
3-4-5 we can say "a few"

I have a car.
There are a couple of girls waiting for you.
He was a few minutes late.

The important thing is we need a number, make sure you answer the **How many** question, always count but say A instead of 1:

We waited for (how many: 1 hour) an hour.
There is (how many: 1 park) a park in my neighborhood.
I have (how many: 1 sister) a sister.
Could you give me (how many: 1 cup) a cup of tea?
I saw (how many: 1 movie) a movie yesterday.
I waited for (how many: 2 hours) a couple of hours.
There are (how many: 4 parks) a few parks in my city.

THE best 1

The superlative form of an adjective is preceded by THE (**da …st**):

the best
the biggest

the happiest
the most exciting
the least expensive
More about superlatives later in the book.

Listener and Speaker

Every conversation consists of two parties: a listener and a speaker (you are the speaker). When choosing between A and THE you should consider whether the listener knows about the thing you are about to introduce:

- if the listener hears for the first time, doesn't know, you should use A: I saw a movie.

- if the listener hears for the second time, knows, you should use THE: I saw the movie.

In the case of "I saw a movie" you introduce the thing (movie) for the first time, the listener hears that information for the first time. You know about the movie you saw, but the listener doesn't, therefore, you should use A: I saw a movie = I saw one movie (any movie).

In the case of "I saw the movie" you introduce the thing (movie) for the second time, the listener knows about the movie you saw. Maybe the previous day you told the listener that you had a plan to see that particular movie, therefore, now the listener knows about which movie you are talking about: I saw the movie = I saw the movie I told you about yesterday (one particular movie).

Notice the interplay between A and THE when telling a story:

I met a girl yesterday. The girl was beautiful. She was wearing a long dress and a pearl necklace. The dress was black and the necklace was white. I decided to take her to an Italian restaurant near the Empire State Building. Unfortunately, the restaurant was closed so we went to the movies instead. We saw an interesting movie. The movie was about a young couple on their first date. The couple decided to go to an Italian restaurant near the Empire State Building. Unfortunately, the restaurant was closed so they went to the movies instead…

You introduce the person (girl, couple) or thing (dress, necklace, restaurant, movie) with A (listener hears for the first time) and follow it up with THE (listener hears for the second time).

Relative Clause

Relative Clause is "a part of a sentence which describes a noun." It is an important grammar for when we forget a noun – it helps us REPHRASE (Virtually Native) – but I didn't know it was called "relative clause." I learned this grammar subconsciously by using Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries and reading the definition of words like:

Teacher = someone **whose** job is to teach in a school or college
Learner = a person **who** is still learning something (sth)
Full moon = the moon **when** it looks like a complete circle
Cause = the reason **why** sth, especially sth bad, happens
Bottleneck = a place **where** a road becomes narrow
Bottleneck = a problem **that** delays progress
Sequel = a book, film, play etc. **that**/**which** continues the story of a previous one

> Why are both **that** and **which** correct? Does it matter? The dictionary says that they are both correct. Don't focus too much on understanding it but rather choose one, and focus on how you can memorize it. You need to Visualize, Personalize and Harmonize it.

As I said, I learned this grammar subconsciously so I can't really teach you how to use it – my advice is to keep using Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries. Until then, until you learn how to use Relative Clause, it is perfectly fine to make 2 sentences instead of 1.

- One (1) sentence (relative clause): This is the shop where I bought my scooter.
- Two (2) sentences: You know my scooter, right? I bought it from this shop.

- 1 sentence: Do you know the woman, who is talking to John?
- 2 sentences: John is talking to some woman. Do you know her?

- 1s: Do you see the cat which is sleeping on the bed?
- 3s: There is a cat on the bed. It's sleeping. Do you see it?

Verbs

Nouns are first, next come *verbs*. The top 20 most common English verbs are: be, have, do, say, get, go, make, know, take, see, come, want, use, find, give, tell, work, try, ask, need. Get into the habit of saying TO before verbs: to be, to have, to do, etc.

Every verb in the English language has 3 forms:
Present / Past / Past Participle
• *Present* is the base form of the verb, the dictionary form.
• *Past* is the second form of the verb.
• *Past Participle* is the third (perfect) form of the verb.

With *regular* verbs the second and third forms are made by adding ED:
    Want/wanted/wanted
    Use/used/used
    Work/worked/worked
    Try/tried/tried

Unfortunately, most common verbs in English are *irregular*:
    Be/was or were/been
    Have/had/had
    Do/did/done
    Say/said/said
    Get/got/gotten or got
    Make/made/made
    Go/went/gone
    Know/knew/known
    Take/took/taken
    See/saw/seen
    Come/came/come
    Think/thought/thought
    Give/gave/given
    Find/found/found
    Tell/told/told
    Feel/felt/felt
    Leave/left/left
    Put/put/put

Mean/meant/meant
Let/let/let

Let us look at the 3 most common English verbs: to Be, to Have, to Do

Be

"To be, or not to be, that is the question"

To BE is somewhat confusing in that it is rarely used in its base/dictionary form BE but instead, in its other forms: AM, ARE, IS, WAS, WERE and BEEN.

Present:
I am …
You are …
He/She/It is …
We/You/They are …

Past:
I was …
You were …
He/She/It was …
We/You/They were …

Past Participle:
I have been …
You have been …
He/She/It has been …
We/You/They have been …

To BE means *equal = the same as*:
I am Bulgarian.
My name is Vladimir.
I am an English teacher.
These are my students.

Most common structures with the verb to BE are:
Person + be + job = What do you do? I am a nurse/teacher/reporter, etc.
Person + be + adjective = She is tall/happy/smart, etc.

Person + be + place = He is in Tokyo. He was in the kitchen. He will be at work.

Thing + be + adjective = This car is expensive/cheep/small/big, etc.
Thing + be + place = The car was in the garage. The computer is on the desk.

Negatives: She is not a doctor. He wasn't in the kitchen.
Questions: Are you happy? Was the car in the garage?

A very important grammatical structure with BE is: THERE IS and THERE ARE (more about THERE IS/ARE later in the book)

Have

To HAVE is the second most common English verb, he/she/it HAS. When not sure about how to collocate your nouns, know that HAVE works 90% of the time:

to HAVE a car/breakfast/a sandwich/a break/a lesson/money/an appointment/responsibilities, etc. (more about HAVE and Collocations later in the book)

Common mistake: "Have" vs "Have Got"

I have a car.
- I don't have a car. (I ~~haven't~~ a car.)
- Do you have a car? (~~Have~~ you a car?)

This mistake is caused by the difference between British and American grammar. In the UK, instead of "Have", people usually say "Have Got":
I have got a car.
I haven't got a car.
Have you got a car?

UK: He has got two sisters.
US: He has two sisters.

UK: He hasn't got two sisters.
US: He doesn't have two sisters.

UK: Has he got two sisters? How many sisters has he got?

US: Does he have two sisters? How many sisters does he have?

Choose whichever you find easier but don't mix them up.

Have To = Must

In spoken English, we usually use Have To (or Have Got To) rather than Must:

He has to (=must) pay 40% tax on his income.
Do I have to wear a tie in the office? Yes, you have to wear a tie at work.

Pregnant women must not wear seat belts.
Pregnant women don't have to wear seat belts.

Common mistake: "Don't Have to" vs "Must Not"

In the positive, "Have to" and "Must" are very similar, both express strong obligation/advice: Everybody must wear a seat belt. = Everybody has to wear a seat belt.

In the negative, "Don't have to" and "Must not" are very different:

- Pregnant women don't have to wear seat belts = do whatever you want – wear if you want to, don't wear if you don't want to (weak Advice/Obligation).

- Pregnant women must not wear seat belts = don't wear a seat belt, it may hurt the baby (strong Advice/Obligation).

In everyday English, people usually say "shouldn't" rather than "must not": Pregnant women shouldn't wear seat belts (strong Advice).

Finally, we also use HAVE/HAD with the Present Perfect and the Past Perfect:
I have been to America.
I had been to America by the time I was 30 years old.

More about the Present and the Past Perfect later in the book.

Do

To DO is the third most common verb in the English language, he/she/it DOES. We use it with all other English verbs, with the exception of to BE and MODAL verbs, to form Negatives and Questions in both the Present (DO/DOES) and the Past (DID) tense:
I like sushi. / I don't like sushi. / Do you like sushi?

She wanted to see him. / She didn't want to see him. / Did she want to see him?

He plays tennis every day. / He doesn't play tennis every day. / Does he play tennis every day?

PLAY vs GO vs DO with Sports

We generally use

PLAY with *ball* sports: Play football, basketball, tennis, soccer, golf, etc.

GO with *ing* activities: Go swimming, skiing, jogging, etc. as well as Go shopping, sightseeing, traveling, etc.

DO with *individual* sports and martial arts: Do yoga, aerobics, gymnastics, judo, karate, martial arts, etc.

DO could also be used with *ing* activities:

Have you done (=tried) skiing?

I did my Christmas shopping yesterday.

Will you do any sightseeing while in Tokyo?

Modal Verbs

A modal is a verb used with another verb to add more meaning to the verb. The most common modal verbs in English are *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, *will*, and *would*. More about modal verbs later in the book.

Adjectives

Nouns are first, next come Verbs, followed by *adjectives*. The top 20 most English common adjectives are: good, new, first, last, long, great, little, own, other, old, right, big, high, different, small, large, next, early, young, important

Most language learners put all their effort into learning nouns and verbs and kind of neglect their adjectives. Adjectives make your language more colorful, precise and sophisticated. English is a language very rich in adjectives, with lots of obscure and subtle synonyms. Take the ever so popular word Fluent – synonyms of *fluent* are *articulate* and *eloquent* and even *well-spoken*. Don't neglect your adjectives, when learning a noun try to add 1 or 2 adjectives to go with it.

Most common grammatical patterns with adjectives (adj) are with the verbs BE, GET and LOOK:

Person/Thing + BE(=equal) + adj:
    I am happy/tall/angry, etc.
    This mountain is high/low/beautiful, etc.

Person/Thing + GET(=become) + adj:
    He got rich/angry/old, etc.
    The weather is getting warm/cold/humid, etc.

Person/Thing + LOOK(=appear) + adj:
    You look tired/happy/sad, etc.
    This car looks expensive/cool/terrible, etc.

Common mistake: "Look" vs "Look like"

"Look" is followed by an Adjective:
    She looked beautiful/excited/sad, etc.
    It looks cold/hot outside.

"Look like" is followed by a Noun or Pronoun:
    He looks like Brad Pitt/me/a banker, etc.
    It looks like snow/rain/it is going to rain.

Common mistake: 3 questions

What does he look like (appearance)? He is tall/fat, etc. (*like* is not in the answer)

What is he like (personality)? He is kind/passionate, etc. (*like* is not in the answer)

What does he like (hobby)? He likes playing golf and collecting stamps. (*like* is usually in the answer)

ED vs ING adj

ED vs ING adjectives are by far the most confusing adjectives for learners of English. We need to start by reviewing how adjectives are usually formed in the English language. Two of the most common ways for making adjectives are with using Suffixes(=word ending) and Prefixes(=word beginning). Here are some of the most common ones:

Prefix with adjectives:
   un~ + happy = unhappy
   il~ + legal = illegal
   im~ + possible = impossible
   in~ + active = inactive
   ir~ + regular = irregular

Suffix with nouns(n) and verbs(v):
   ~able + comfort (v) = comfortable
   ~al + music (n) = musical
   ~ful + beauty (n) = beautiful
   ~ish + child (n) = childish
   ~ive + act (v) = active
   ~less + end (n) = endless
   ~ous + danger (n) = dangerous
   ~y + rain (n) = rainy

ED and ING adjectives are formed from verbs. Let's take the verb *confuse*:
   Confuse + ed = confused
   Confuse + ing = confusing

Confuse (v) – sth confuse sb
   These grammar rules confuse me (*confuse* is a verb in the present simple).

These grammar rules confused me (*confused* is a verb in the past simple).

These grammar rules are confusing me (*confusing* is a verb in the present continuous).

Confused (adj) – be + confused (be + adj)
I am confused by this grammar rule.
be tall/happy/rich/confused – confused is an adj

Confusing (adj) – be + confusing (be + adj)
Some grammar rules are confusing.
be easy/difficult/confusing – confusing is an adj

Here are some of the most common verbs we use to make ED and ING adj:
Annoy–annoyed-annoying
Bore–bored-boring
Confuse–confused-confusing
Disappoint–disappointed-disappointing
Excite–excited-exciting
Interest–interested-interesting
Move–moved-moving
Relax–relaxed-relaxing
Satisfy–satisfied-satisfying
Shock–shocked-shocking
Surprise–surprised-surprising
Tire–tired-tiring

There are a few ING exceptions (ED doesn't change):
Impress–impressed-impressive (~~impressing~~)
Scare–scared-scary (~~scaring~~)
Stress–stressed-stressful (~~stressing~~)

First, you need to be able to tell the difference between:
verbs in the Past Tense vs ED *adjectives*
verbs in the Continuous vs ING *adjectives*

Bore (v)
This movie will bore you.
Am I boring you?
He bored me.

Bored / Boring (adj)

The movie was boring.
I was bored by the movie.

Interest (v)
This article might interest you.
Golf has never really interested me.

Interested / Interesting (adj)
I'm interested in this article.
Golf is not interesting.

Scare (v)
Did I scare you?
You scared me.
You are scaring me.

Scared / Scary (adj)
I am very scared.
The movie was very scary.

Secondly, you need to understand the difference between ED and ING adj.

Let me tell you a story. Imagine this:

It's a fine summer day. You are on the beach lying in the sun. The sun is shining, it's warm, and you are feeling the sun's rays on your skin. The sun is shining and you are soaking up the sun, you feel warm. The sun is shining, therefore you feel warm. You feel warm because the sun is shining. Keep that image.

- The sun is the source of all that warmth, the sun is the reason you feel warm.

- You react to the sun, you feel warm as a result of the sun's shining.

- The sun is ING

- You are ED

- ING is the reason/cause

- ED is the result/effect

- ING is usually a thing or an event: the movie was boring

- ED is only a person or an animal: I was bored

There is a strong correlation between ING and ED and in order to better understand it you need to put the 2 adjectives in one sentence. How can we

combine the following 2 sentences:

The movie was boring.

I was bored.

and form 1 sentence?

We connect both sentences with the conjunction *so*: The movie was boring, so I was bored (in written English, people prefer to use *therefore*, rather than *so*, because they sound more formal).

Now, let's change the order of the two sentences:

I was bored.

The movie was boring.

We connect both sentences with *because*: I was bored because the movie was boring.

Think about **the sun**, what is the sun, the cause, ~ING. The other side is ~ED. Having both ED and ING adjectives in a single sentence might not be natural, but it makes for a good practice and helps you understand the correlation between the 2. Let's look at some other examples:

I was disappointed because the exam result was disappointing (sun).

The news was surprising (sun), so I was surprised.

My dog was scared because the other dog was scary.

Disneyland is exciting, therefore I am excited.

I am stressed because my job is stressful.

My job is tiring, so I am tired.

He is interesting, therefore I am interested in his idea.

Now let's make the above sentences more natural:

I was disappointed because the exam result was poor.

I'm going to Disneyland tomorrow – I'm very excited.

When I'm stressed out I go for a drive. I find driving very relaxing.

I've had a long and tiring day, I'm exhausted.

He is very experienced, so I would be very interested to hear his opinion.

Comparatives & Superlatives

Before discussing comparatives and superlatives we need to talk about Syllables.

Syllable

Melody has rhythm and pitch and language has intonation and stress. Language too has rhythm but we call it *syllable*. The official definition of a syllable is a single unit of speech.

For me, *syllable is the beat* of the language. Syllables, intonation and inflection work together to create the overall harmony of the language.

The easiest way to count syllables is to say the word with your mouth shut and count the sounds you make with your nose, in other words, try to hum the word and count the hums. Most dictionaries give the syllable count in the /pronunciation/ and it is shown by separating each syllable with a dot positioned either low or in the middle /prə·nan·si·ei·shən/.

When forming *comparatives* and *superlatives* we follow some very simple rules:

We add ~*er* and ~*est* to the end of short (one-syllable) adjectives. By adding ~er and ~est we automatically add a second syllable/beat. With superlatives we also add the definite article *the* which means adding a third syllable/beat:
Short /1syllable/, shorter /2s/, the shortest /3s/
Tall /1s/, taller /2s/, the tallest /3s/
Fat /1s/, fatter /2s/, the fattest /3s/

With two-syllable adjectives ending in *y*, we drop the *y* and add ~*ier* and *the* ~*iest* thus adding a third beat and forth with superlatives:
Happy /2s/, happier /3s/, the happiest /4s/
Angry /2s/, angrier /3s/, the angriest /4s/
Crazy /2s/, crazier /3s/, the craziest /4s/

With two syllable adjectives not ending in *y* as well as long adjectives (=containing three or more syllables) we simply add *more* and *the most* or *less* and the *least*:
Active /2s/, more active /3s/, the most active /4s/
Beautiful /3s/, less beautiful /4s/, the least beautiful /5s/
Interesting, less interesting, the most interesting

Interesting is an interesting word. How many syllables does it have?
in·tres·ting: /3s/ in UK English
in·tə·res·ting: /4s/ in US English

Collocation:
    Beautiful girl /4s/
    Interesting story /5s/
    Tall building /3s/

    A beautiful girl /5s/
    An interesting story /6s/
    A tall building /4s/

Another way I teach articles, the indefinite article A in particular, is by using syllables. A/AN should be thought of as an extra beat:
    A tall building /ə·to:l·bil·ding/ 4s
    An interesting story /ən·in·tres·ting·sto·ri/ 6s
    A beautiful girl /ə·bju:·ti·fəl·gə:l/ 5s

Not all adjectives follow the normal rules when forming comparatives and superlatives. The most common exceptions are:
    Good, better, the best
    Bad, worse, the worst
    Far, father, the farthest
    Far, further, the furthest

Comparatives + THAN:
    My brother is shorter than me.
    Japanese cars are better than American cars.
    English grammar is easier than German grammar.
    My girlfriend is more beautiful than your girlfriend.
    Portugal is less populous than Greece.

Comparatives + A BIT / A LITTLE or MUCH to show degree:
    My brother is a little shorter than me.
    Japanese cars are a bit better than American cars.
    English grammar is much easier than German grammar.
    My girlfriend is much more beautiful than your girlfriend.
    Portugal is a little bit less populous than Greece.

Superlatives + THE (a superlative by definition expresses THE highest degree of a particular quality):
    Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world.
    He won the best actor award.

Toyota Prius is one of the most fuel-efficient cars on the market today.

Adverbs

Nouns are first, next come Verbs, followed by Adjectives and finally *adverbs*. A very easy and quick way to assess a person's English language proficiency is to count the number of adverbs – the more adverbs a person uses the more proficient she or he is. The top 20 most common adverbs are: up, so, out, just, now, more, also, here, well, very, only, then, there, back, even, down, still, too, really, most

Adjectives describe Nouns
Adverbs describe Verbs

Adverbs are usually formed by adding LY to the end of adjectives (adj+ly=adverb):

quick – quickly
(to make) a quick decision
to decide quickly

slow – slowly
(to buy) a slow car
to drive slowly

beautiful – beautifully
(to hear) a beautiful song
to sing beautifully

However, there are a few exceptions:
good – well
(to speak) good English
to speak English well

Hard, Late, Fast don't change:
hard – hard (~~hardly~~)
(to ask) a hard question
to study hard

late – late (~~lately~~)
(to have) a late breakfast
to eat late

fast – fast (~~fastly~~)
(to buy) a fast car
to drive fast

Lately=recently (not an adverb of *late*): Have you seen any good movies lately?

Hardly=barely (not an adverb of *hard*): She lives in Canada so I hardly ever see her.

Common mistake: "Hard" vs "Hardly"
Working hard or hardly working?

Hard as an adverb means using a lot of effort or force and it is usually placed <u>after the verb</u>:
It is raining hard.
He didn't kick the ball hard enough.
She works very hard.
You have to study hard to pass the final exam.

Hardly also an adverb means *almost not*, *barely*, the opposite of Hard, and it is usually placed <u>before the verb</u> (*hardly* is often preceded by *can* or *could* and often followed by *ever*):
It is raining hard, I can hardly see the road.
He was so tired, he could hardly kick the ball.
She works very hard, she hardly ever leaves her office before 8 pm.
I hardly watch any TV because I have to study for the final exam.

Prepositions

Prepositions (in, on, at, to, by, with, for, etc.) are arguably the most difficult aspect of English grammar, but I believe that prepositions are difficult to master when studying any foreign language, not just English.

How should you study prepositions?

Prepositions like all other words should be studied in combination with other words. Don't focus on individual prepositions but rather notice how they are used when learning Verbs and Adjectives as well as Nouns. Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries indicate prepositions in **bold type** making it easy for language learners to notice the most common combinations:

Verbs:
    go to
    give to
    borrow from
    lend to
    wait for

Phrasal verbs:
    get up
    look forward to
    made out of
    make up for
    pick up

Adjectives:
    interested in
    angry with
    bored with
    crazy about
    surprised by

Nouns:
    in the park
    at the station
    on the floor
    at home

by train/bus

Don't learn individual prepositions! Having said that, let's look at some common use of some of the most frequent prepositions.

To

TO is used to show direction with the verb Go: go to Japan/a party/work/my friend's house/school/university/the office/work, etc.
    I went to Japan last year.
    I have been to Japan.

instead of Go we could also use Walk, Drive, Fly:
    Fly to Japan = go to Japan **by** plane
    Drive to work = go to work **by** car
    Walk to school = go to school **on** foot

Give/Lend/Show/Send sth TO sb:
    Give a present to my wife = give my wife a present
    Lend money to my friend = lend my friend money
    Show my ID to the police = show the police my ID
    Send an email to my boss = send my boss an email

Exceptions: we don't use TO with:
    ing activities – go shopping/sightseeing/skiing/swimming
    home – go home, walk home, drive home, fly home
    abroad/overseas – go abroad, travel overseas
    there/here – go there, come here

Why? Does it matter? Just HARMONIZE.

To = In order to

He went to America to study English.
To protect against disease, wear a condom.
She married an American to get a green card.

Common mistake: married to(~~with~~) sb

On

ON is used to show that sth is on top of sth else
   (put) on the floor/ground/table … on my body/head/face/lips
   sit on/in a chair

ON + business / vacation:
   go to New York on business
   go to Hawaii on vacation

ON + modes of transportation:
   get on the bike/bus/train/plane
   get off the bike/bus/train/plane

   get in the car/taxi
   get out of the car/taxi

ON + Days and Dates:
   on Monday/Tuesday/a clear day, etc.
   on 30th May/June 3rd, etc

   on weekends – US English
   at weekends – UK English

We don't use ON before Last, This, Next

In

IN + Months, Seasons, and Years:
   In January/February, etc.
   In (the) summer/winter, etc.
   In 1973/2001, etc.
   But, On 2 October 1973 (Days and Dates take precedence over Months and
Years)

IN + Cities and Countries with the following verbs:
   Live in London/France/the countryside, etc.
   Be in Paris/England, etc.
   Arrive in Tokyo/Japan, etc.

IN + Places and Buildings like:

be in the room/kitchen/restroom/bathroom, etc.
be in (the) hospital … in a restaurant/hotel, etc.

But we could also use AT with Places and Buildings.

At

AT is used to show Place with buildings:
stay at home
meet at the station/airport/bus stop
be at/in a restaurant/hotel
be at/in school/university/work/the office, etc.

AT with time:
at 5:30/1 o'clock, etc.
at noon/midnight, etc.

Collocations

One of the **biggest mistakes** people make when studying vocabulary is that they study individual words.
<div align="center">Never study individual words</div>
instead, learn new words in combination with other words. We call this a <u>collocation</u>. *Collocation* is "a word or phrase which is often used with another word or phrase in a way that sounds correct and natural." Terms like: *word chunking, word web, word association* could also be used to mean *collocation*.

For instance, you are trying to learn the noun *jacket* … when you learn a *noun* you should always collocate (=connect) it with a *verb*:

wear a jacket
put on a jacket
take off a jacket

2-3 collocations should be enough as long as they are the most common ones.

Hand:

take his hand
hold her hand
shake my hand

Bag:

carry a bag
hold a bag
buy a bag

Computer:

watch a computer? – not really, the verb *watch* is not our first choice for the noun *computer*:

use a computer
switch on/off my computer

When you learn a *noun*, you could also add an *adjective* to the collocation:

buy a waterproof jacket
wear a light jacket

hold her beautiful hand

have a cheap bag
buy a fast computer

When you learn an *adjective*, you must always link it to a *noun*.

When I say *beautiful*, you say …? *Woman*, *flower*, *dress*, etc. There are many collocations with the adjective *beautiful* but you need at least 1 quick one:

meet a beautiful woman
wear a beautiful dress
buy beautiful flowers

Never study individual words but rather learn *verb-noun* collocations: drink water, call my friend, watch a movie, etc. A verb-noun collocation, not a word, should be the smallest building block of your approach to grammar.

Grammar tenses – Present, Past and Future

Non-native English speakers should feel lucky that the English language turned out to be the lingua franca of our time, the main reason being that English grammar is relatively easy to master. Most other widely spoken languages like Spanish, Russian and German have much more convoluted grammar rules, and Chinese … well, we all know what the problem with Chinese is. English spelling does pose a challenge for most non-native as well as many native speakers, but for the most part, English grammar is pretty straightforward with just a few complicated grammar rules.

Grammar tenses are all about the *verb*, about choosing the appropriate verb form in order to correctly represent the intended time – Past, Present or Future. However, each verb (usually) comes with a noun attached to it (collocation), therefore we don't just deal with individual verbs but rather with verb-noun collocations.

There are 5 major, + 5 additional, ++ 5 extra grammatical structures and tenses. Each grammar tense is explained with example sentences.

- The first thing you need to do is place each example sentence in context by answering the following 3 questions:

Who are you talking to as you say the sentence?
Where are you as you say the sentence?
Why do you say the sentence?

The answer to the Why question will provide a trigger word – it is what we call FUNCTION. Function is the Purpose the sentence has, for example: (ask for) advice, (give) directions, (make a) request, etc. The <u>Function word is usually not in the sentence</u>.

- The second thing you should do is associate each Function/grammar structure with another trigger word – we will call it CUE. Cue words are often words about time, such as: tomorrow, usually, yesterday, now, recently, etc. The <u>Cue word is usually in the sentence</u>.

Both sets of trigger words – CUE and FUNCTION – will hopefully trigger a memory thus help you retrieve the grammar you need. The main focus is on *remembering*, and less on explaining – there are better books on the market

explaining the theory of English grammar. This book is about meaningful encoding for better recall.

- The third thing you need to do is HARMONIZE, pronounce each example sentence as if it were one word.

- And the last thing you need to do is NOTICE how grammar is used in Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries (MLD) definition and example sentences. MLDs are the most important study tool for language learners of all levels. MLDs are not just good for learning the meaning of words and phrases but for learning grammar as well. You need to Notice how grammar is used in the definition and the example sentences dictionaries provide. Just from the definition alone, you can learn so much. Most definitions are in the present simple.

Present Simple

notice = to **see** or **hear** somebody/something; to **pay** attention to sb/sth

Most definitions are in the Present Simple Tense because a definition is a Fact. We use the Present Simple to talk about Facts and things that are USUALLY true:

The Earth revolves around the sun.
Dogs hate cats.
Generally speaking, Japanese cars are better than American cars.
Practice makes perfect.

I believe all languages have Present Simple tense. We also use it to talk about Habits, Routine and things we USUALLY do:
What do you usually do on weekday mornings?

Vladimir: I usually wake up at 6 am, go jogging, take a shower, have breakfast and head to work. (notice the collocations)

Since Routine and Habit is something we do repeatedly, a common question you might ask is HOW OFTEN do you + collocation:

How often do you go jogging?
How often do you wash your hair?
How often do you get a chance to practice your English?

We usually use Present Simple with the word USUALLY as well as adverbs of frequency like OFTEN, SOMETIMES, RARELY, etc:

My wife usually gets home at about 6 pm.
I often just have a sandwich for lunch.
My dad cooks dinner sometimes, but usually my mom does it.
My mother rarely wears jewelry.

CUEs: Usually, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, How often do you, Generally speaking
FUNCTION: Routine, Habit, Usually, Always, Fact, Generalizing…

A note on the Simple Present:

In the third-person singular (he, she, it) the verb ends in S – cymbals:

My wife (she) usually gets home about 6 o'clock.
The Earth (it) revolves around the Sun.

John (he) plays tennis twice a week.
Practice (it) makes perfect.

As I said, to me the added S, has never been about grammar but always about sound – I don't think about grammar, I hear cymbals.

'He', 'She', 'It', as well as names of people (John, Smith, Vlad, etc.) names of cities (Tokyo, New York, etc.), my boss/wife/husband/son is often followed by cymbals.

There are… is usually followed by S (cymbals): There are (2,3) pond*s* in the park.

There is… is usually followed by A and never by S: There is *a* park in my neighborhood.

The negative sentences in Present Simple usually use Do / Does + not:
I do not wake up at 7 am.
My wife does not get home before 6 pm.

The question form is also with Do / Does:
Do you wake up at 6 o'clock?
What time does your wife get home?

Common mistake: people use Simple Present to talk about actions happening in the present, happening NOW. I guess it's because of the name of the grammatical structure Present Simple Tense – a lot of people take the word *present* to mean *now*. However, with NOW we usually use the present continuous.

+ Present Continuous

to be + ing: You **are reading** this book now.

Most definitions are in the Present Simple but if you look closely you will also notice the Present Continuous Tense: *habit* = something which you **do** often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you **are doing** it

- Present Simple is about the way things Usually are:
It rarely snows in Tokyo.
The rainy season usually ends in the middle of July.

- Present Continuous is usually about things happening Now, as we speak:

Is it snowing outside?
I think it is starting to rain.

CUE: ing, Now
FUNCTION: happening Now, as we speak, etc. My native Bulgarian doesn't have the Present Continuous tense (we use the Present Simple) but it is quite easy for me to imagine it.

Future Simple

prediction = a statement about what you think **will** happen in the future (Cambridge Dictionary)

The second major grammar structure is Simple Future Tense. Not all languages have Future tense. The Japanese language for instance doesn't and that's perfectly fine – it doesn't prevent Japanese people from developing futuristic technology. Just look at their space-age toilets (washlet). Some languages don't have future tenses but English does and the first word that comes to mind when talking about the future is WILL.

<div align="center">Remember the WILL, don't forget the WILL.</div>

What will you do TOMORROW/NEXT week?
    I will see my friend tomorrow.
    I will go to England next week.

To make the future less certain you can add the word *probably*:
    I will probably see my friend tomorrow.
    I will probably go to England next week.

CUEs: Will, Tomorrow, Next week/month
FUNCTION: Future, from now on

Another way to express future actions is using Present Continuous:
What are you doing tomorrow/next week?
    I am seeing my friend tomorrow.
    I am going to England next week.

and yet another common way to talk about the Future is using "be going to":

+ Going To

prediction = a statement about what you think **is going to** happen (Longman Dictionary)

    The weather forecast said it was going to rain tomorrow.
    Are you going to go to his party?

I'm going to be a famous movie star when I'm older.

++ Future Continuous

will be + ing: I **will be seeing** him tomorrow.

As you can see, there are many ways to express future actions, and the difference is in how certain the future event is. Be Going To and Present Continuous usually denote higher certainty:

I am going to see him tomorrow.
I am seeing him tomorrow.

However, that's not something you should be overly concerned about. Future Simple and Future Continuous are perfectly fine too:

I will see him tomorrow.
I will be seeing him tomorrow.

In a real face-to-face conversation, you won't have time to choose among the 4 therefore, the first grammar you need to master is Future Simple with WILL.

Remember the WILL.

The negative form of Will is Will not. In spoken English, *will not* often contracts to *won't* /wount/:

I won't see him tomorrow.

Question:
Will you see him tomorrow?

+ IF & First Conditional

numb = **If** a part of your body is numb, you are unable to feel it, usually for a short time

Something related to Will, the Future and making Plans is a grammatical structure called First Conditional and the CUE word here is IF. I believe most languages have IF in their grammar.

Conditional (=if) sentences are made up of 2 parts:

1st part is IF, also called the *condition*

2nd part is Will, also called *result*

IF + present simple (condition), Will + base verb (result)
   we could change their places:
Will + base verb (result) IF + present simple (condition)

   If it rains tomorrow (condition), we will stay home (result).
   We will stay home if it rains tomorrow.
   If it rains tomorrow, we won't go to the beach.
   Will we stay home if it rains tomorrow?
   If it rains tomorrow, will we stay home?

Depending on the FUNCTION, you could replace Will with Should, May, Can, etc.
   If the pain persists, you should consult your doctor. (advice)
   If it rains tomorrow, we may stay home. (possibility)
   If you need money, I can lend you some. (possibility)

CUEs: If
FUNCTION: If, Future, 2 sentences, etc.

Common mistake: 2 will in 1 sentence:
   If it ~~will~~ rain tomorrow, we will stay home.

   People make this mistake because the IF (condition) part of the sentence is in the future 'tomorrow'. Just think in terms of sound and melody: If you Will, If it Will, If I Will, If she Will do not sound well together … IF and WILL don't like to be too close one another. They like to keep a bit of distance … at least 3, 4 words apart:
   If it rains tomorrow, we will stay home.

Besides the First Conditional, we also have the Second and Third Conditional. What all grammatical forms have in common is that they all consist of 2 parts:
   1st part called the condition with IF
   2nd part called result with WILL or WOULD
They differ in that:
   First Conditional is about *possible* events in the *Future*
   Second Conditional is about *impossible* events in the *Present*
   Third Conditional is usually about *regrets* in the *Past*

++ IF & Second Conditional

The classic example sentence with the Second Conditional is:
    If I were a bird, I would fly.

    I'm not a bird, it's impossible for me to be a bird, therefore I imagine being a bird. It's a form of daydreaming and it's daydreaming about the Present. It's not about the Future (if I were a bird, I would fly tomorrow), nor it's about the Past (if I were a bird, I would fly yesterday); it's about Now: If I were a bird, I would fly (now). It's about the Present but since it is all imaginary/impossible we use the Past Tense:
    If I were (~~am~~) a bird, I would (~~will~~) fly.

Other common examples are:
    If I were younger, I would exercise more.
    If I had a million dollars, I'd buy a house for my mother.
    What would you do if you were me?
    If I were you, I wouldn't buy that house.

CUEs: If, Would
FUNCTION: If, Present, Impossible, daydreaming, 2 sentences, etc.

+ IF & Third Conditional

If + past perfect, would + present perfect

The third conditional is unquestionably the most difficult to master. You need to feel really comfortable with the First and Second Conditional in order to learn the third. The Third conditional is about events that could have happened but did not happen in the Past and it usually conveys a sense of Regret and more rarely Appreciation:

    If you had worked harder, you would have passed your exam. (regret)
    If you hadn't worked harder, you wouldn't have passed your exam. (appreciation)

    If I had known you were coming, I would have cooked a meal for you. (regret)
    If I hadn't known you were coming, I wouldn't have cooked a meal for you.

(appreciation)

If you had stayed, this would never have happened. (regret/appreciation)

CUEs: If, If I had, Would have
FUNCTION: If, Past, Regret, appreciation, 2 sentences

Needless to say, you have to feel very comfortable with the Present Perfect and Past Perfect in order the use the third conditional – more about Present and Past Perfect later on in the book.

As you start to form a conditional sentence with IF, you need to quickly figure out whether it is about the Future, Present or Past. Having decided among the 3 you should be able to produce the corresponding grammar. Right after you say the IF, *pause* for 2 seconds and do all the mental work:

If … (Future, possible) …the weather is sunny tomorrow, I will + collocation (go to the beach)
If … (Present, impossible) … the weather was sunny (is cloudy now), I would go to the beach.
If … (Past, regret) … the weather had been sunny yesterday (was cloudy yesterday), I would have gone to the beach.

Something similar to Second and Third conditional is Wish:

++ Wish

to Wish sth = to Want sth *impossible*

Wish + Past Simple = *impossible* desire about the Present (similar to Second Conditional):

I wish I were younger. (impossible)
If I were younger I would exercise more. (second conditional)

I wish I didn't have to go to work today. (I have to go to work today)
If I didn't have to go to work today, I would go to the beach.

Wish + Past Perfect = desire about the Past, *regret* about something that didn't happen (similar to Third Conditional)

I wish I had studied English at university. (regret)

If I had studied English at university, I would have found a better job. (third conditional)

I wish I had known you were coming.
If I'd known you were coming, I would have cooked a meal for you.

CUEs: Wish, I wish, I wish I had
FUNCTION: Regret, Impossible

+ When vs If

Call me if you need money.
Call me when you need money.

I will phone you if I get home.
I will phone you when I get home.

IF is about things that *might* happen:
If I go to India, I will visit the Taj Mahal.
Call me if you need money.
If it stops raining, I will show you the garden.

WHEN is about things that *will certainly* happen:
When I go to India I will visit the Taj Mahal.
Call me when you need money.
When it stops raining, I will show you the garden.

When and *If* can be used interchangeably as well:
Call me if you need money.
Call me when you need money.

If I go skiing, I always wear a helmet.
When I go skiing, I always wear a helmet.

If you don't add enough wood, the fire goes out.
When you don't add enough wood, the fire goes out.

WHEN is also a question word about time and therefore we often use it as a CUE word about the Past meaning "at the time that":
When I was a child,
When I was young,

When I was in college,
When I was 15 years old,
When I moved to Japan,
When the earthquake hit,
When I lived in America,

The "when-sentence" is subordinate and it needs a main sentence which is usually in the Past Simple or Used to:

When I was a child, there were no buildings here.

When I was young, I used to play football.

I played football when I was in college.

I got my driver's license when I was 18 years old.

The first time I ate raw fish was 10 years ago, when I moved to Japan.

When the earthquake hit, I was on the 23rd floor of my office building.

When I lived in America, I used to go to McDonald's almost every weekend.

Past Simple

ancestor = a member of your family who **lived** a long time ago

The third major grammar structure is the Past Simple Tense. I believe most languages have this verb tense.

Did you do anything interesting YESTERDAY / LAST summer / 3 days AGO?
I went shopping yesterday.
I got married last summer.
I saw my friend 3 days ago.

CUEs: Yesterday, Ago, Last, When I …
FUNCTION: Past, tell a particular story

The difficulty with Simple Past is the irregular verbs and unfortunately, most common English verbs are irregular.
I saw my friend yesterday.
Last month I went to Hawaii with my family.
He left the office 2 hours ago.
She kissed me on the mouth.

The negative sentences in Past Simple take Did + not (Didn't):
I did not see my friend yesterday.
I didn't go abroad last month.
She didn't kiss me on the mouth, she kissed me on the cheek.

The question form is also with Did:
Did you see your friend yesterday?
Who did you see yesterday?
Did you go to Hawaii last month?
When did you leave the office last night?
Did she kiss you?

Don't forget that after Did the verb goes back to its first/base form, to its dictionary form. We don't say:
Did she kissed you?
I didn't go (went) to Hawaii last month.
Did you see (saw) your friend yesterday?

+ Used To

Another common grammatical structure for expressing Past action is USED TO + base verb. USED TO + base verb is so easy because we don't have to use the second form of the verb – we always use the first/base form.

USED TO is about the Past but we never use it with 'yesterday', 'ago', 'last' – those CUEs are for the Past Simple.

USED TO is similar to the Present Simple in that it is about a 'habit' and 'routine' but in the Past, and we <u>don't</u> have that 'habit' Now – the Present is <u>different</u> from the Past

I used to play tennis twice a week (now I don't).
I used to be lazy (now I'm not).
My friend used to live in France (now he doesn't).
My sister used to love cats (now she doesn't).

CUEs: Used to, When I was …
FUNCTION: Past habit, Past ≠ Present

Common mistake: USED TO vs *be used to*. They are very different, but more importantly, they sound different:
I used to eat sushi. /aiju:stui:t/
I'm used to eating sushi. /amju:stui:ting/
/ai/ vs /am + ~ing/

USED TO is a *modal verb* and is always followed by the base form of the main verb and never by ~~ING~~:
Used to drink/smoke/play/live, etc.
Didn't use to drink/smoke = Never used to drink/smoke, etc.

be USED TO is an *adjective* and is usually followed by ING:
be/get used to + ~ing = be/get accustomed to + ~ing
I eat with chopsticks every day, so I am used to it. I am used to eating with chopsticks, but when I first moved to Japan I used to eat with forks and knives.

++ Was Supposed To & Used to

A very unlikely grammatical pair, but I like to teach them together. What do

"was supposed to" and "used to" have in common? There is a similar level of contrast that both convey:

- *Used to* expresses contrast between Past and Present(Past ≠ Present): I used to smoke = I smoked regularly before, but I don't smoke now.

- *Was supposed to* expresses contrast between Plan and Reality(Plan ≠ Reality), between what was planned and what actually happened: I was supposed to have lunch with my friend = I had a plan to meet my friend but we didn't meet (the plan fell through).

My boss wasn't supposed to know about the party = We had a plan to keep the party secret from our boss, but he found out (somebody told him).
The meeting was supposed to take place on Thursday, but we've had to postpone it.

CUEs: Was supposed to
FUNCTION: Plan fell through, Plan ≠ Reality

++ Past Continuous

The Past Continuous is a relatively less common grammatical tense. We often use it in conjunction with the Past Simple and good CUEs are the words WHEN and WHILE:
I was doing the dishes when the phone rang.
What were you doing when the earthquake struck?
While he was sleeping, thieves broke in and stole his suitcase.
The phone rang while you were drying your hair.

CUE: was/were ~ing, When, While
FUNCTION: a continuous action in the past is interrupted by another (WHEN) or is happening at the same time as (WHILE)

Present Perfect

Past Simple & Present Perfect: *ancestor* = an animal that **lived** in the past, that modern animals **have developed** from

Present Simple & Present Perfect: *kickoff* = the time when a game of football **starts**, or it **begins** again after it **has stopped** because of a goal, etc.

Have + Past Participle

The Present Perfect Tense, the fourth major grammatical structure, is the most complex one:

I have lived in America. (live/lived/*lived*)

My mother has never been to Japan. (be/was/*been*)

Have you run a full marathon? (run/ran/*run*)

Wikipedia says that analogous forms are found in some European languages like Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, etc. My native Bulgarian has something similar to Present Perfect, but Russian, as far as I know, doesn't. Japanese has something similar to Present Perfect but not quite the same and according to Google University, Korean doesn't have that grammatical structure.

The main Function of Present Perfect is when you talk about Experience. Some languages use Past Simple to talk about Experience so it is very important to explain the difference between Present Perfect and Past Simple:

- Past Simple often focuses on the exact time of the experience and it is used with more specific words of time like: YESTERDAY, 2/3 days AGO, LAST week/summer, etc.

I went to Australia last year.

I saw a movie yesterday.

I ate sashimi last night.

- Present Perfect doesn't focus on the exact time of the experience and it is used with more unspecific words of time like: ALREADY, not …YET, Have you EVER, I have NEVER, RECENTLY, etc.

I've already been to Australia.

I haven't seen any movies recently.

Have you ever eaten sashimi?

With Present Perfect the exact time is not important. If you want to specify the exact time you have to switch to Past Simple and make a second sentence:

I *have* already *been* to Australia. I *went* there last year.
I *haven't been* to Australia yet. I *will* go there next year.
Have you ever *been* to Australia? Yes, I have. I *went* there 3 years ago.
Have you *seen* any films recently? Yes, I have. I *saw* a movie yesterday.

+ Present Perfect Continuous

Present Perfect has a very close relative in the Present Perfect Continuous Tense.

Present Simple & Present Perfect Continuous: *dump* = to suddenly **end** a romantic relationship you **have been having** with someone.

Have + been + ing

It is much easier to make – you don't need to remember the third form of the verb:

I have lived in Japan for 10 years.
I have been living in Japan for 10 years.

I have lived in Japan since 2001.
I have been living in Japan since 2001.

Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous are often used with SINCE and FOR to indicate <u>duration</u> of time from the '*past*'…'*until now*' and answering the question HOW LONG?
FOR + duration
SINCE = from

How long have you had a cold?
I have had a cold for 2 days.
I have had a cold since the day before yesterday.

How long have you been playing football for?
I've been playing football since I was a child.
I've been playing football since 1989.
I've been playing football for many years.

SINCE and FOR with HOW LONG is a very common grammar structure about

duration (however the trigger word *during* is usually used with Past Simple). Other Cue words about duration from 'past' 'until now' are RECENTLY and LATELY:

Have you been doing anything interesting lately?
What have you been up to recently?
Have you seen any good movies recently?
Lately, I've been feeling a bit sad.

CUEs: Already, Yet, Since, For, How long, Recently
FUNCTION: Experience, until now, so far, etc.

+ Past Perfect

Had + Past Participle

The movie had already begun by the time we arrived.
He had been at work for 20 minutes when the plane hit the north tower.
I had not studied Japanese before I moved to Tokyo.

We need to start by saying that in order to learn the Past Perfect you need to feel very comfortable with the Present Perfect – you need to be able to use the Present Perfect tense quickly and effortlessly:

- Present perfect is about an Experience you have had *until Now*. We might say *so far* to mark the present moment (but we don't have to).

- Past perfect is about an Experience you had had *until Then*, until a particular point in the Past. With the Past Perfect we have to mark that point in the past and we usually do that with the preposition **by** as well as *before* and *when*:

I have already been to America. (until Now)
By the time I was 27 I had already been to America. (before Then)

The train has already gone. (until Now)
By the time we got to the station the train had already gone. (before Then)

We've sold over 1,000 tickets. (until Now)
By the end of the day she had sold over 1,000 tickets. (before Then)

Have you ever studied Japanese? (until Now)

Had you studied Japanese before you moved to Tokyo? (before Then)

I have already started learning Japanese.
I had already started learning Japanese when I moved to Tokyo.

"Past in the past" is another name for the Past Perfect:
I had already been to America (past) by the time I was 27 (in the past).
Had you studied Japanese (past) before you moved to Tokyo (in the past)?
I had already started learning Japanese (past) when I moved to Tokyo (in the past).

We use the Past Perfect with IF & Third Conditional:
If he hadn't called, I wouldn't have known.
I wouldn't have met you if I had gone to another school.

As well as in Reported Speech with *said*, *told*, *asked*:
He said he had never eaten raw fish before.
I asked her if she had been to Bulgaria.
She told me she had never been to Bulgaria.

To reiterate: in order to master the Past Perfect, your Present Perfect has to be very quick and effortless. As you make a sentence in the Past Perfect, your effort should go into defining and marking the point in the past *by* simultaneously replacing Have with Had.

CUEs: By, By the time, Had, If I had…, Before, When
FUNCTION: Past in the past, until then, If, Reported speech, etc.

++ Future Perfect

Will Have + Past Participle

The Future Perfect is much less common than the Past Perfect (I myself virtually never use it). As with the Past Perfect, in order to master the Future Perfect, you need to be very handy with the Present Perfect.

- Present perfect is about an Experience you have had *until Now*.

- Future perfect is about an Experience you *will have had by a particular time in the Future*. We usually mark the future point in time with the preposition **by**:
By the time a child is five, he will have watched hundreds of hours of

television.

    I will have lived in Japan for 17 years by 2020.

    By the end of this book, you will have learned all English grammar basics.

"Past in the future" is another name for the Future Perfect:

    I will have lived in Japan for 17 years (past) by 2020 (in the future).

CUEs: By, By the time, Will have

FUNCTION: Past in the future

What we have covered so far is about 90% of all the grammar you are likely to use in a face-to-face conversation. You need to quickly figure out whether the sentence you are about to make is about

    - something you USUALLY do,

    - sth you WILL do tomorrow,

    - sth you did YESTERDAY, or LAST week, or 2, 3 months AGO,

    - your Experience so far, sth you have ALREADY done, or haven't done YET.

    You need to choose quickly between the 4 grammar tenses, before you even open your mouth. THERE ARE a few more grammatical structures in the English language, English HAS a few more grammatical forms like:

There Is / There Are...

is the fifth major grammatical structure, a structure I like very much. THERE + BE(is/are) is very basic yet extremely common:

There are many high mountains in Switzerland.
There are a lot of French words in the English language.
There is a big park near my house.
There is a new movie on at our local movie theater.
There was a big earthquake last night.
There were many people at the concert last night.
There will be rain tomorrow.

There aren't many tourists at this time of year.
There isn't a McDonald's restaurant in my neighborhood.
There won't be enough snow to go skiing next week.
There weren't many people at the party yesterday.
There wasn't a single person at the party yesterday.

Is there a movie theater in your neighborhood?
Are there any Micheline star restaurants in Sofia?
Was there a lot of food at the wedding?
Were there many people at the party yesterday?
Will there be enough snow to go skiing?

There is/isn't, There are/aren't, (present)
There were/weren't, There was/wasn't, (past)
There will/won't be, (future)

CUEs: There is *a*, There are …*s*
FUNCTION: Exist, Describe things

Instead of THERE IS / THERE ARE we could also use the second most common verb HAVE / HAS – not exactly the same, but close enough:

+ Have / Has

Switzerland has many high mountains.

The English language has a lot of French words.
We had a big earthquake last night.
We will have rain tomorrow.

We don't have many tourists at this time of year.
My neighborhood doesn't have a McDonald's restaurant.
We didn't have many people at the party yesterday.
We won't have many people at the party tomorrow.

Does your neighborhood have a movie theater?
Does Sofia have any Micheline star restaurants?
Did they have enough food at the wedding?
Will we have enough drinks for all guests?

CUEs: I have
FUNCTION: Possessions

There are a few more additional grammar structures with HAVE:

+ Have sth done

I call this grammatical structure "rich people's grammar". The idea is that you don't do the action but instead somebody else is doing it for you. This somebody is usually a professional person (hairdresser, dentist, mechanic, etc.) whom you pay to do the action (hence, rich people use this grammar).

HAVE + object + Past Participle
(don't confuse with Present Perfect)

I had my hair cut yesterday (cut/cut/*cut*). (by somebody else)
I cut my hair yesterday (cut/*cut*/cut). (by myself)

I had my nails done (do/did/*done*)? (by sb else)
I did my nails (do/*did*/done)? (by myself)

I had my car fixed (fix/fixed/*fixed*). (by sb else)
I fixed my car (fix/*fixed*/fixed). (by myself)

Did you have your nails done? (by sb else)
Did you do your nails (by yourself)?

You have to have your teeth cleaned.

You have to clean your teeth.

John will have his house painted.
John will paint his house.

The person doing the action is not important, the focus is on the action. If you want to say who is doing the action then you add *by*:

Queen Elizabeth II had her portrait painted by Pietro Annigoni.
You should have your teeth checked by a dentist at least once a year.
It is advisable to have your website designed by a professional.

I called it "rich people's grammar" to better illustrate its function, but of course, it is not just used by rich people. We use it when talking about our:

Hair with verbs like *cut*, *washed*, *done*, *dyed*
Tooth/Teeth with *pulled out*, *cleaned*, *checked*
Car, House, Computer with *repaired*, *fixed*

In informal spoken English, you can replace *have* with *get*:

You need to have your hair cut. = You need to get your hair cut.
I'm going to have my car repaired. = I'm going to get my car repaired.

CUEs: Have sth done, I had my hair cut
FUNCTION: I didn't do it, Rich people's grammar, I paid sb to do sth.

++ Have sth (**bad**) done

I had my money stolen. (always in the Past tense)

This grammar could be quite confusing at first – it is exactly the same as *have sth done* (focus is on the action) but with a diametrically opposite meaning:

- With *have sth done* you request (and pay) a professional person to do a job that affects you in a good way: I had my hair dyed blond = I paid a hairdresser to dye my hair blond (I asked for it, I paid for it and I enjoyed it).

- With *have sth (bad) done* you didn't ask a person to do the job because the job affects you in a bad way: I had my wallet stolen = Somebody stole my wallet = My wallet was stolen (I didn't ask for it, I didn't cause it, but I suffered the consequences of the action).

It does sound confusing when you first hear it because of the idea of asking

and paying somebody to do something, but the clarity is in the CUE words that come with that variation of *have sth done*, and the most common cue word is *stolen*:

She had her car stolen.

Other cue words are *broken*, *taken*, *destroyed*, etc. but *stolen* is the first you need to learn – *had sth stolen* – always in the past tense:

I had my bag/wallet/car stolen.
Tyson had his nose broken in a fight.
Thousands of people had their homes destroyed by the tsunami.

CUEs: Stolen, I had my … stolen, Money, Wallet, etc.
FUNCTION: stolen property, focus on the action, bad action.

++ Have sb do sth

This is yet another pattern with the verb Have which can be quite confusing. The focus is on the person doing the action more than on the action. Here *have* means *tell* or *instruct* or even *order*:

I'll have the porter show you to your room.
I'll have the bellboy take up your luggage.
He had his secretary make us coffee.
My father had me clean his car.
I will have her give you a call.

Have sb do sth, carries a certain sense of authority, therefore the person doing the action is usually a person we have some kind of authority over – bellboy, secretary, child, etc. *Have sb do sth* is a weaker, more polite form of *Make sb do sth*. A close cousin of *have sb do sth* is *get sb to do sth*

++ Get sb to do sth

Get means *persuade* and *convince* as well as *make* and even *trick*:

I'll get him to give you a call.
She finally got her son to tidy up his room.
He got his sister to help him with his homework.

It's very hard to tell the difference between *have sb do sth* and *get sb to do sth*. The obvious difference is the preposition *to*:

Have is without ~~to~~: I will have him give you a call.
Get is with *to*: I will get him to give you a call.

They both could mean *tell* and *persuade* as well as ask:

I'll tell him to give you a call.
He asked his sister to help him with his homework.

CUEs: Have sb do sth, Get sb to do sth
FUNCTION: I will have him call you, … It all depends on the context but my advice is to think of them as a softer, more polite version of *Make sb do sth*. Longman Dictionary defines both grammatical structures as *make sb do sth*.

++ Make sb do sth

This structure suggests strong authority and force = *force sb to do sth*. The idea is that the person doesn't want to do the action but he is forced to do it. Think of a police or an army officer giving orders. Or a parent or your boss at work. They have the authority, therefore you have no choice but to obey their orders:

The police officer told me to get out of the car and made me walk a straight line.
My parents always make me do my homework before I go out.
They made us work for 12 hours a day.
She made her son tidy up his room.

Make sb do sth is stronger than *have sb do sth* and the emphasis is on the unwillingness of the person to do the action. With *have sb do sth* the focus is on who is doing the action.

CUEs: Make sb do sth, Force sb to do sth
FUNCTION: Unwillingness, Authority, Police, Force

++ Let sb do sth

Allow sb to do sth = Let sb do sth = Give sb Permission to do sth.

She wanted to go but her parents wouldn't let her.
I can't come out tonight – my dad won't let me.
I'm letting you stay up late, just this once.
Her mom won't let her come with us.
My boss lets me take a day off whenever I want.

The person doing the action needs *permission* to do that action. If there is no need for permission we don't use that grammar:

My mother lets me tidy up my room. This sentence doesn't make much sense because you don't need your mother's permission to tidy up your room.

The police officer let me wear a seat belt. You don't need the police officer's permission.

CUEs: Let sb do sth, Allow sb to do sth,
FUNCTION: Permission, Can I …?, Boss, Parents, etc.

Modal Verbs

A modal is a verb used with another verb to add more meaning to the verb. The most common modal verbs in English are "can," "could," "may," "might," "must," "should," "will," and "would." Let's go through each one and look at how they change the meaning of the verb.

Can / Could

"Can" is mainly about Ability = "be able to"

    I can cook.
    I can't cook.
    Can you cook?

    I can read and write about 500 Chinese characters.
    It is so noisy in this room, I can't hear anything.
    Can you hear me?

"Could" is the past tense of "Can":
    I could read and write at a very young age.
    It was so noisy that we couldn't hear anything.
    Could you hear what he said?

The question form is usually used to make Requests.

Request

Can/Could I + collocation (borrow a pen)
    Can I borrow your pen? (casual)
    Could I borrow your pen? (polite)

Can/Could you + collocation (lend a pen)
    Can you lend me your pen? (casual)
    Could you lend me your pen? (polite)

"Can" is more casual than "Could":
    Can I see your new dictionary?
    Can you show me your new pen?

"Could" is a more polite form of "Can":
    Could I see your new pen?
    Could you show me your new pen?

"Can/Could you …?" and "Can/Could I …?" basically mean the same thing, accomplish the same goal:
    you show me the pen = I see the pen

The difference is in the direction of the verb, how you match the verb (borrow, lend, show, see, etc.) with the pronoun (I, You). Remember the following most common pairs:

Can/Could *I borrow* …?
Can/Could you *lend* (*me*) …?

Can/Could I *see* …?
Can/Could *you show* (*me*) …?

Can/Could *I get* …?
Can/Could *you give* (*me*) …?

Could I get a discount?
Could you give me a discount?

CUEs: Can I …?, Could I …?, Can you …?, Could you …?
FUNCTION: Request, ability

Will / Would

We already talked about "Will" with Future and First Conditionals. "Will" changes to "Would" in Second and Third Conditionals as well as in Reported Speech (see Reported Speech).

<div align="center">Would you – polite Requests</div>

Would you + collocation
   Would you lend me your pen?
   Would you show me your new car?
   Would you give me a discount?

"Would you" is more formal and polite than "Could you".

   We don't use Would with "I": ~~Would I~~ …?

++ Would you mind …?

"Would you mind" is a very polite way to make Requests:
   Would *you* mind lend*ing* me your pen?
   Would you mind *if I* borrow*ed* your pen?

   "You" is with "ing" = Would you mind doing sth
   "I" is with "if" + past tense (second conditional) = Would you mind if I did sth

   Would you mind giving me a discount?
   Would you mind if I asked for a discount?

Common mistake: "would you mind" = "would you disagree" *or* "would you be annoyed if I" so the answer is reversed: "Yes" = "No" and "No" = "Yes"

Would you mind if I borrowed your pen? = Would you be annoyed if I borrowed your pen?
   Yes, I would mind = Yes, I would be annoyed = *No*, you cannot borrow my pen.
   No, I wouldn't mind = No, I wouldn't be annoyed = *Yes*, you can borrow my pen.

To avoid mistakes, instead of "Yes" or "No", you can say:
    Positive: Sure, no problem.
    Negative: I'm sorry, but … (give a reason)

Would you mind if I used the restroom?
    + Sure, no problem.
    – I'm sorry, but it's clogged.

Would you mind driving me to the station?
    + Sure, no problem.
    – I'm sorry, but I am busy right now.

You can also use these two responses to answer requests with Can and Could:

Can I use the restroom?
Could you drive me to the station?
    + Sure, no problem.
    – I'm sorry, but ...

Would you like / Want

"Want" is one of the most common verbs in the English language so you need to know how to use it quickly and effortlessly:
    want + noun: I want + a new car
    want + to verb: I want + to buy a new car
    want sb to do sth: I want + my husband + to buy me a new car

    Negative: I don't want …
    Question: Do you want …?

"Would like" is the polite version of "Want":
    would like + noun: I would like + a new car
    would like + to verb: I'd like + to buy a new car
    would like sb to do sth: I'd like + my husband + to buy me a new car

    Negative: I wouldn't like …
    Question: Would you like …?

The question forms are used to Offer something or Invite somebody:

Offer:

Do you want a cup of tea? (casual)
Would you like a cup of tea? (formal)

Invite:
Do you want do see a movie with me? (casual)
Would you like to see a movie with me? (formal)

CUEs: Want, want to, I wanna, want you to, Would like, I'd like to
FUNCTION: Want, Offer, Invite

Invite

When Inviting, I usually use the 2-step invitation:

1st step is the occasion with "will" or "going to" (future):
I will go to see a movie tomorrow.

2nd step is the invitation:
Do you want to come with me? (casual)
Would you like to come with me? (formal)

1st step:
My friends and I will play football after work?

2nd step:
Do you want to come with me/us?
Would you like to come with me/us?

I'm going to my friend's birthday party. Would you like to come with me?
I am going to the beach on Sunday. Do you want to come with me?
We will have a picnic this weekend. Would you like to come with us?

CUEs: Do you want (to) …?, Would you like (to) …?
FUNCTION: Invite

++ Would = Used to

"Would", like "Used to", can be used about Past Habits. I usually start my

story with "used to" and then follow it up with "would":

When I started learning English, I *used to* read out loud and record my voice on my old stereo. Then I *would* play it back, listen carefully and write everything down.

Mixing "used to" with "would" makes your English less repetitive.

May / Might

Oxford Dictionaries say that "the two words (may & might) are generally interchangeable", mean the same thing, which is a 50% Possibility/Certainty of sth happening or being true:

You are wrong. = I am 100% sure that you are wrong.
You might be wrong. = You may be wrong. = I am about 50% sure that you are wrong.

It will rain tomorrow. (100%)
It might/may rain tomorrow. (about 50%)

First conditional:
If it rains tomorrow, I will stay home.
If it rains tomorrow, I might/may stay home.

Third conditional:
If you had studied harder, you would have passed the exam.
If you had studied harder, you might have passed the exam.

You could also use "Could" to express Possibility:
You could stay home if it rains tomorrow. (first conditional)
If you had studied harder, you could have passed the exam. (third conditional)

Many people disagree on which one (may, might, could) expresses more or less certainty. Don't worry too much about it, the three words are generally interchangeable.

CUEs: May, Might
FUNCTION: 50% Possibility/Certainty

May I – polite Requests

May I borrow your pen?
May I see your new car?
May I get a discount?

"May I" is more formal and polite than "Could I"

We don't use May with "you": ~~May you~~ …?

Request summarized

Requests with I (casual to polite):
  Can I borrow your pen?
  Could I borrow your pen?
  May I borrow your pen?
  Would you mind if I borrowed your pen?

Requests with You (casual to polite):
  Can you lend me your pen?
  Could you lend me your pen?
  Would you lend me your pen?
  Would you mind lending me your pen?

In order to be even more polite, you could add Please to the request. You can place Please at the beginning, before the verb, or at the end:

  Please, can you show me your new camera?
  Could you please show me your new camera?
  Would you show me your new camera, please?

  Please, can I see your new camera?
  Could I please see your new camera?
  May I see your new camera, please?

Response:
  + Sure, no problem.
  – I'm sorry, but …(I don't have it on me).

Should with Advice

We use "should" to *give* and *ask for* Advice/Opinion:

You should use monolingual dictionaries as much as you can.
You shouldn't use Oxford Dictionary if you are a beginner.
What should I do? Should I buy this car?

Advice with "Want to"

Native speakers often use "want to" instead of "should" to *give* Advice:

You want to use Longman Dictionary if you are a beginner.
~~Do I want to buy this car~~? Should I buy this car?
You don't wanna buy this car. It has rust under the paint.

Advice with "Could"

You could also use "could" to *give* weak Advice:
You could buy that car instead.
You could also use Cambridge Dictionary.

Advice with "Have to"

If you want to give a strong Advice/Opinion you could use "have to"
You have to buy Toyota Prius. It's one of the most fuel-efficient cars on the market.
You have to exercise more if you want to lose weight.

"Have to" is stronger than "should". The opposite of "have to" is "shouldn't":
You shouldn't buy this car.
You shouldn't exercise if you have heart problems.

Common mistake: "don't have to" or "shouldn't"

In the positive, "Have to" and "Should" are very similar, both express strong Advice/Opinion ("have to" is a bit stronger than "should"):
You should take this medicine after meals = take it after meals (strong).
You have to take this medicine after meals = take it after meals (stronger).

In the negative, "Don't have to" and "Shouldn't" are very different:
You shouldn't take this medicine after meals = don't take it after meals

(strong).

    You don't have to take this medicine after meals = take it whenever you want (very weak).

    "Should" is similar to "Have to" is similar to "Must" = do it = 1 choice
    "Shouldn't" is similar to "Must not" = don't do it = 1 choice
    "Don't have to" = "don't need to" = do it if you want, don't do it if you don't want = 2 choices

CUEs: Should, shouldn't, Should I …?
FUNCTION: Advice, Opinion

++ Should have

We often use "should + present perfect" to talk about regrets and past mistakes – it is similar to "wish + past perfect". "Should have" means that something did not happen, but we wish it had happened:

    I should have studied harder (=I didn't study hard enough and so I failed the test. I regret it now.). I wish I had studied harder.

    I shouldn't have drunk so much (=I drank too much and now I am hungover. I regret it now.). I wish I hadn't drunk so much.

CUEs: I Should have …
FUNCTION: Regret

Reported Speech

Reported, also Indirect speech is something we use all the time. As the name suggests, reported speech is used when reporting something that was said, but not using the exact same words. What we do is transform Direct speech into Reported speech. The CUEs are:

she said (that) …
he told me (that) …
I asked …

This so very common grammar comes with two sets of rules – the first is for language tests and is very strict, and the other one is for daily conversations and is much laxer.

Pronouns. Changing the pronouns is important for both a language test and casual conversation. In reported speech, you need to change the pronoun depending on who says what:

"I like my new car."
He said that *he liked his* new car. (language test)
He said that *he* likes *his* new car. (daily conversation)

"I" changes to "he"
"my" changes to "his"

It's very important to change the pronouns, failing to do so may cause a lot of communication problems. Failing to make the necessary changes in tense will have little impact on the communication process, however, it will lower your test score.

Backshift. When taking a language test you have to change the tense by moving it back one tense – shift one back:

Present Simple changes to Past Simple
"I love you." She told me she loved me.

Past Simple – Past Perfect
"I went shopping on Monday." He said he had gone shopping on Monday.

Present Perfect – Past Perfect
"I have never been to Thailand." He said he had never been to Thailand.

Past Perfect stays Past Perfect

"By the time I got to the station the train had already left." She told me that by the time she had gotten to the station the train had already left.

Will – Would

"I will go to America." He said that he would go to America.

Can – Could

"You can do it." She told me I could do it.

Common mistake: said ~~me~~
It is either "he said to me" or "he told me"

Reporting Questions

There are 2 main types of questions: Yes/No & Wh

With Yes/No-questions we use *if* or *whether*:
"Do you like sushi?" He asked me if I liked sushi.
"Have you been to Cuba?" I asked her if she had been to Cuba.
"Did you work yesterday?" She asked me whether I had worked the day before.
"Will you work tomorrow?" He asked her if she would work the next day.

With Wh-questions we keep the question word (When, Why, etc.):
"Where are you from?" She asked me where I was from.
"When did you arrive?" He asked her when she had arrived.
"Why do you want to learn English?" I asked him why he wanted to learn English.

In a regular face-to-face conversation, very few native speakers use backshift but most of them change the pronouns – changing Pronouns is more important than changing the Tenses. On the other hand, instead of he said, she told me, I asked, a lot of young people simply say:

and he was like,
and she was like,
and I was like, etc.

and sb *was like* + direct speech

Direct speech:
  Matt: "What did you do yesterday?"
  I: "I went to the beach."
  Matt: "Did you have a good time?"
  I: "Yeah, it was awesome."

Reported speech:
  I saw Matt the other day and he was like what did you do yesterday.
  And I was like I went to the beach.
  And Matt was like did you have a good time.
  And I was like yeah, it was awesome.

It's a very casual yet very common way of doing indirect reports among young people.

CUEs: he said, she told me, I asked her
FUNCTION: Reported speech

Questions

As we already said, there are two main types of questions:

1. Yes/No questions:
   Do you speak English?
   Can you speak English?
   Did you speak English yesterday? etc.

2. Open-ended (WH) questions:
   What languages do you speak?
   How many languages do you speak? etc.

In most languages around the world, making questions is very easy:

- For Yes/No-questions, some languages have question words which are inserted in certain places in a positive or negative sentence and transform it into a Yes/No question, while others use intonation: Japanese has か(ka), Chinese has 吗(ma), Bulgarian has ли(li), Spanish and Russian use intonation, etc.

- For Open-ended questions, most languages add a question word (What, When, Why, Who, Where, Which, How) at the beginning of a positive sentence and transform it into a question. Unfortunately, English questions are not that easy to make, they are grammatically more difficult to structure.

Going back to the original question: How do we ask questions in English?
The answer is hiding in plain sight. The answer is in the word *answer*:

Don't ask a question you don't know the answer to.

There are 3+1 steps of making a question:

1. Give a positive (Yes) answer
2. Give a negative (No) answer
3. Ask a Yes/No-question

4. Ask a Wh-question

Before you ask a question you need to know its answer.

It sounds so counter-intuitive. You might ask: "How can I know the answer?

If I knew the answer there would be no point of asking the question." I know it sounds counter-intuitive but it works 90% of the time. You want to ask a question but before you do that you need to *imagine* its answer.

Let me explain and let me start with Yes/No questions.

English questions are grammatically more difficult to structure than answers, but every Yes/No question already contains the answer. That's why they are called Yes/No questions because the answer is usually Yes or No. Therefore, before you ask somebody a Yes/No question imagine the same question directed at YOU, imagine being asked the same question.

<div align="center">What would your answer be?</div>

How would you answer your own question? But, don't give a short Yes or No answer but rather a <u>full</u> one. Actually, it doesn't matter whether your answer is Yes or No, positive or negative, what matters is you give a full answer to your own question. Positive answers are easier than negative so it's much better to start with giving a full positive (Yes) answer to your own question.

For example, you want to ask a woman called Elena about her abilities. Something about her skills at playing sports, or musical instrument, or cooking, or programming, or painting, etc.…Now, imagine that Elena is asking *you* the exact same question, about *your* abilities, how would you answer her question?

1. Make your answer positive starting with Yes:
   Yes, I can play the piano.
   Yes, I am good at cooking.
   Yes, I speak English well.
   Yes, my child has good mathematical ability.
   Yes, I have the ability to communicate with other cultures.

2. Let's follow it up with a negative 'No' answer.
   No, I cannot play the piano.
   No, I am not good at cooking.
   No, I do not speak English well.
   No, my child does not have good mathematical ability.
   No, I do not have the ability to communicate with other cultures.

3. Now it is much, much easier to structure a question. Just move the word

preceding "not" in front of the sentence and you have a Yes/No question:

Can you play the piano?
Are you good at cooking?
Do you speak English (well)?
Does your child have good mathematical ability?
Do you have the ability to communicate with other cultures?

Now you want to ask Elena about her home country.

1. The first thing you need to do is imagine Elena asking you about *your* home country…what would *your answers* be?

Yes, my country is mountainous.
Yes, there are many mountains in my country.
Yes, my country has high mountains.

You need the <u>structure</u> of the answer, not the exact word/answer:

My country has … mountains (*high* or *low* is not important).
There are … mountains in my country (*many* or a *few* is not important).
My country is … (*flat* or *mountainous* is not important).

2. Let's give the negative answers:

No, my country is not mountainous, my country is flat.
No, there are not many mountains in my country.
No, my country does not have high mountains.

3. And now the Yes/No questions:

Is your country mountainous/flat?
Are there many mountains in your country?
Does your country have high mountains?

And don't worry about response time, the human brain has awesome computing power and as long as you waste no time and quickly follow the 3 steps you are guaranteed to save time and avoid stutter.

Once you master the Yes/No-questions, open-ended 'Wh' questions will be easier to learn. Wh-questions have the basic structure of Yes/No question plus a question word (Wh). You still need to give a Yes or No answer to your question first.

Let's imagine that Elena is your new coworker and you want to get to know her better by asking her a few questions (imagine she is asking you those

questions):

Step 1: Yes answers (your answers):
   Yes, I joined ABC company because the money is better here.
   Yes, I am married.
   Yes, I have a child.
   Yes, I have been married for 5 years.
   Yes, I like to play tennis in my free time.
   Yes, I am interested in rugby.
   Yes, I will meet our CEO tomorrow.

Step 2: No answers:
   No, I did not join ABC because the money is better here.
   No, I am not married.
   No, I do not have a child.
   No, I have not been married for 5 years.
   No, I do not like to play tennis in my free time.
   No, I am not interested in rugby.
   No, I will not meet our CEO tomorrow.

Step 3: Yes/No question.
   Did you join ABC because the money is better here?
   Are you married/single?
   Do you have a child (children)?
   Have you been married for 5 years?
   Do you like to play tennis in your free time?
   Are you interested in rugby?
   Will you meet our CEO tomorrow?

Step 4: Open-ended 'Wh' questions:
   Why did you join ABC company?
   Do you have children? How many children do you have?
   How long have you been married for?
   What do you like to do in your free time?
   What are you interested in?
   When will you meet our CEO?

Once you figure out when to use DO, when to use HAVE, and when to use BE, you can merge steps 1 and 2.

   Step 1: Answer your own question

Step 2: Make a Yes/No question
Step 3: Make an open-ended question

Step 1: I went to America with my friend / I did not go …
Step 2: Did you go to America with your friend?
Step 3: Who did you go to America with?

1: My husband wants a cup of coffee. / does not want
2: Does your husband want a cup of coffee?
3: What does your husband want to drink?

1: I would like to order a sandwich./ would not like
2: Would you like to order a sandwich?
3: What would you like to order?

1: My favorite movie is … / is not
2: Is … your favorite movie?
3: What is your favorite movie?

1: We should meet in Times Square. / should not
2: Should we meet in Times Square?
3: Where should we meet?

1: I usually go surfing on weekends. / do not go
2: Do you usually … on weekends?
3: What do you usually do on weekends?

1: I have been to America. / have not been to
2: Have you been to America?
3: Which countries have you been to? How many countries have you been to already?

1: I will go shopping tomorrow. / will not
2: Will you go shopping tomorrow?
3: What will you do tomorrow?

And again, don't worry about slow response time. Trust that your brain will go through the steps fast enough and with just a bit of practice it will take no more than a few seconds to formulate a sentence or question.

++ Tag questions

Yes/No-questions and Wh-questions are when we don't know the answer, but Tag questions are when we have an inkling of what the answer might be. We make a statement/sentence and we add a *question tag* to the end of it.

The easiest way to form a tag question is by adding *right* to both positive and negative sentences:

It is hot, right?
You like sushi, right?
You have never tried raw fish before, right?
We are meeting at the pub, right?
You didn't forget to renew your passport, right?
The boss will come back tomorrow, right?
There were so many beautiful flowers in the park yesterday, right?
Your wife can speak English, right?

But we usually add a question tag.

If the sentence is positive, the question tag is negative:

It is hot today, isn't it?
You like sushi, don't you?
You have tried raw fish before, haven't you?
We are meeting at the pub, aren't we?
You renewed your passport, didn't you?
The boss will come back tomorrow, won't he?
There were so many beautiful flowers in the park yesterday, weren't there?
Your wife can speak English, can't she?

If the sentence is negative, the question tag is positive:

It isn't that hot today, is it?
You don't like sushi, do you?
You have never tried raw fish before, have you?
We aren't meeting at the pub, are we?
You didn't forget to renew your passport, did you?
The boss won't come back tomorrow, will he?
There weren't that many beautiful flowers in the park yesterday, were there?
Your wife can't speak English, can she?

++ Negative questions

Negative questions are less about asking and more about expressing surprise:
    Aren't you hot wearing this sweater? = Don't you feel hot?
    Don't you like sushi?
    Haven't you tried raw fish before?
    Aren't we meeting at the pub?
    Didn't you renew your passport?
    Isn't the boss supposed to come back tomorrow?
    Weren't there any beautiful flowers in the park yesterday?
    Can't your wife speak English?

<div align="center">Questions and Intonation</div>

- Yes/No-questions are pronounced with rising intonation.

- Wh-questions are pronounced with either flat or falling intonation.

- Negative questions are usually pronounced with rising intonation.

- Tag questions are usually pronounced with falling intonation, pronouncing them with rising intonation turns them into Yes/No questions – it all depends on how certain you are about your statement:
    more certain – falling intonation
    less certain – rising intonation
Tag questions with *right* are pronounced with rising intonation.

Answering questions

Responding to Yes/No is pretty straightforward:

Is it hot today?
    Yes, it is.
    No, it is (it's) not.

Do you like sushi?
    Yes, I do.
    No, I do not (don't).

Have you tried raw fish before?
    Yes, I have.
    No, I have not (haven't).

Are we meeting at the pub?

Yes, we are.

No, we are not (aren't).

Did you renew your passport?

Yes, I did.

No, I did not (didn't).

Will the boss come back tomorrow?

Yes, he will.

No, he will not (won't).

Were there any beautiful flowers in the park yesterday?

Yes, there were.

No, there were not (weren't).

Can your wife speak English?

Yes, she can.

No, she cannot (can't).

Most people make mistakes when answering Negative questions and Negative tags: is it Yes or No? There are 2 rules that will help you answer those questions correctly:

1st rule:

NO is followed by Negative: No, I'm not / No, I haven't / No, I won't / etc.

YES is followed by Positive: Yes, I am / Yes, I have / Yes, I will / etc.

DON'T say: Yes, I'm not / No, I am / No, it is / Yes, I didn't / Yes, I haven't …

2nd rule:

Give FULL answers to tag & negative questions.

You need to treat every Negative question like a regular Yes/No question and focus on the *collocation* at the core of the question and give your answer by following the aforementioned 2 rules

Don't you like sushi? (collocation: like sushi)

Yes, I like sushi.

No, I don't like sushi.

answers: "Yes, I don't …" & "No, I like …" break the 1st rule

You don't like sushi, right? (like sushi)

Yes, I like sushi.

No, I don't like sushi.

You don't like sushi, do you? (like sushi)
    Yes, I like sushi.
    No, I don't like sushi.

You like sushi, don't you? (like sushi)
    Yes, I like sushi.
    No, I don't like sushi.

Do you like sushi? (like sushi)
    Yes, I like sushi.
    No, I don't like sushi.

You have never tried raw fish before, have you? (collocation: try raw fish)
    Yes, I have tried raw fish.
    No, I haven't tried raw fish.
answers: "Yes, I haven't …" & "No, I have …" break the 1st rule

You have tried raw fish before, right? (try raw fish)
    Yes, I have tried raw fish.
    No, I haven't tried raw fish.

Haven't you tried raw fish before? (try raw fish)
    Yes, I have tried raw fish.
    No, I haven't tried raw fish.

Have you tried raw fish before? (try raw fish)
    Yes, I have tried raw fish.
    No, I haven't tried raw fish.

Aren't you hot wearing this sweater? (collocation: be hot)
    Yes, I am hot.
    No, I'm not hot.

Aren't we meeting at the pub? (collocation: meet at the pub)
    Yes, we are meeting at the pub.
    No, we aren't meeting at the pub.

As you begin to feel more comfortable and confident answering negative questions you can start giving shorter answers as you complete your answer silently, in your head:

Didn't you renew your passport? (collocation: renew my passport)
    Yes, I did (renew my passport). Here it is.
    No, I didn't (renew my passport). I forgot.

and with time even single Yes/No answers:

The boss won't come back tomorrow, will he? (collocation: come back tomorrow)
    Yes (he will come back tomorrow), at 2:30 I believe. Why?
    No, (he won't come back tomorrow). He will come back the day after tomorrow.

Can't your wife speak English? (collocation: speak English)
    Yes, (she can speak English) and she also speaks Korean.
    No, (she can't speak English) but she can speak Korean.

How about you? Me too vs Me neither

How about you? (=What about you?) is a very natural follow-up question and a good way to carry on a conversation:

    Do you like sushi?
    Yes, I do (positive answer). How about you?
    - Me too (= also true about me/we are same).
    - I don't (= not true about me/we are different).

    Do you like sushi?
    No, I don't (negative answer). How about you?
    - Me neither (= also true about me/we are same).
    - I do (= not true about me/we are different).

Me too is used to show that a *positive* statement is also true about me.
Me neither is used to show that a *negative* statement is also true about me.

    You haven't tried raw fish before, have you?
    Yes, I have. How about you?
    - Me too (= also true about me/same)
    - I haven't (= not true about me/different)

    You haven't tried raw fish before, have you?
    No, I haven't. What about you?

- Me neither (= also true about me/same)
- I have (= not true about me/different)

Didn't you renew your passport?
Yes, I did. How about you?
- Me too (= also true about me/same)
- I didn't (= not true about me/different)

Didn't you renew your passport?
No, I didn't. What about you?
- Me neither (= also true about me/same)
- I did (= not true about me/different)

Will you attend the meeting?
Yes, I will. How about you?
- Me too (= also true about me/same)
- I won't (= not true about me/different)

Will you attend the meeting?
No, I won't. How about you?
- Me neither (= also true about me/same)
- I will (= not true about me/different)

Greetings

There are 2 main ways native English speakers greet each other – one is using the question word How and the other is using the question word What.

   - Greetings with How are answered with "Good" and followed up with "yourself" (rising intonation): How … Good

   - Greetings with What are answered with "Not Much" and followed up with "yourself" (rising intonation): What … Not much

How is it going?
How have you been?
How are you (doing)?
   Good. Yourself?

What's up?
What's new?

What have you been up to?
  Not much. Yourself?

Confirm and Clarify

All this talk about questions, we almost forgot the few questions every language learners must learn first:

Sorry? / I'm sorry?
Pardon me? / I beg your pardon?
Could you repeat that? = Could you say that again?

Could you speak more slowly?
Could you speak more loudly? = Could you speak up?
Could you write that down?

What do you mean?
What do you mean by …?
Did you say (16) or (60)?

These are the few questions every language learner must learn first. There is nothing wrong with not being able to hear or understand what other people say, but there is plenty wrong not being able to ask, confirm and clarify.

Cues and Functions

Every grammar structure came with 2 sets of trigger words – CUE and FUNCTION – in the hope that at least one of those keywords will trigger a memory that will help you retrieve the grammar you need.

Cues are usually words of time as well as modal verbs.

Functions are usually words of purpose.

Cues

Complete the sentences and assign Function to each one.

> Use the following collocations: borrow a pen, lend money, watch a movie, play tennis, meet a celebrity, go to America, collect stamps, show my collection, study hard, take a bath, see a friend, read books, drink sheep milk, live in Japan, work for ABC company, be young, be a driver, be busy, wear a tie, have a meeting, and/or come up with collocations of your own.

VISUALIZE, PERSONALIZE and HARMONIZE each sentence (steps 6, 7 +1 of Virtually Native).

Yesterday, …
Usually …
How long …?
He asked me …
Will you …?
I've … recently.
Is there a … in …?
What do you do? I …
What do you do for fun? I …
You should …
Generally speaking, …
If … will …
I rarely …
I wish I had …
Last …

Lately …
Me neither.
I've … for …
I usually …
I was supposed to …
Is there a … around here?
How long does …?
Have you ever …?
Can you …?
I used to …
Should I …?
Could you please …?
I haven't … yet.
I like … on weekends.
I'd like … next weekend.
I've … since …
Tomorrow …
If I had …, I would have …
Would you like to …?
I'm not going to …
I often …
Me too.
Would you mind if I …?
I think you should …
She told me …
There was a … in …
There is a … on …
I sometimes …
How long have …?
How often do you …?
If … would …
… ago.
When I was … I used to …
I've never …
I have to …
Have you …?
Do I have to …?

I wish I …
Would you like me to …?
Are there …s in …?
May I …?
I'm going to … Would you like to …?
You could …
You don't wanna …
I should've …
… my hair cut.
I've already …
Would you … please?
Would you like …?
Would you mind …?
I didn't use to …
You don't have to …
He said …
I've always …
Do you want me to …?
Could I …?
I could have … if …
… money stolen.
There are …s … at …
There were …s … in …
I want you to …

Example 1:

I've … since …

I've been living in Japan since 2001.

Function: Duration until now
Cues: How long have you … (Cue is in the question), Since,
Collocation: live in Japan

Visualize and Personalize:

Who: my student S
Where: at my school
Why/Function: answer a HOW LONG question

Mini dialogue:

S: How long have been living in Japan?
V: I've been living in Japan since 2001.

Harmonize:
How long have you (been) [haulong həvju] and [haulong həvjubin]
I've (been) … since [aiv … sins] and [aivbin … sins]

<div align="center">Example 2:</div>

Can you …?
Can you lend me $20 until tomorrow?

Function: Request
Cues: Could you, lend
Collocation: lend me money, have money

Visualize and Personalize:
Who: my friend F
Where: at a coffee shop
Why/Function: Request

Mini dialogue:
V: Can you lend me $20 until tomorrow?
F: I'm sorry, but I don't have that kind of money on me.

Harmonize:
Can you (lend me) [kænju] and [kænjulendmi]
I'm sorry but [aimsoribat]

Functions

Assign Cue(s) to each Function and write a sentence. VISUALIZE, PERSONALIZE and HARMONIZE each sentence (steps 6, 7 +1 of Virtually Native):

Experience
Request
Future
Advice
Now (rain)
Rich people's grammar

Job
Hobby
Past
Reported speech
Routine
Past habit: past ≠ present
Plan ≠ Reality
Invite sb
Directions
Offer sth to sb
Regret
Opinion
Stolen (money/wallet, etc.)

Example 1:

Advice:
   Cue: should
   Collocations: take aspirin, have a headache
   Sentence: You should take some aspirin.
   Function: give Advice

Visualize and Personalize:
   Who: my coworker C
   Where: at my office
   Why/Function: give Advice

Mini dialogue:
   C: I have a slight headache.
   V: You should take some aspirin.

Harmonize:
   You should [jushud] … take aspirin [teikasprin]
   Have a headache [hevəhedeik] … Have a slight headache [hevəslaithedeik]

Example 2:

Regret:
   Cue: should have
   Collocations: follow/take advice, take aspirin, have a headache

Sentences: You should have followed my advice. You should have taken aspirin.
Function: Regret

Visualize and Personalize:
Who: my coworker C
Where: at my office
Why/Function: Regret

Mini dialogue:
C: I have a terrible headache.
V: You should have followed my advice. You should have taken aspirin. If you had taken aspirin you would have felt better.
C: I wish I had taken your advice.

Harmonize:
You should have (taken) [jushudav] and [jushudavteikan]
If you had (taken) [ifʃuhəd] and [ifʃuhədteikan]
I wish I had (followed) [aiwishaihəd] and [aiwishaihədfoloud]

CUEs: Should have, I wish, I wish I had
FUNCTION: Regret

Example 3:

Job:
Cue: What do you do? How long have you …?

Visualize and Personalize:
Who: a stranger at a party S
Where: at a party
Why/Function: asking about Job

Mini dialogue:
V: What do you do (for a living)?
S: I am an accountant. How about you?
V: I am an English teacher. How long have you been an accountant for?
S: I've been an accountant for 4 years.

Harmonize:
What do you do (for a living) [watdujudu] and [watdujudufoəlivin]
I'm a/an [aimə] and [aimən]
How about you [hauəbauchu]

How long have you (been) [haʊlɒŋhəvju] and [haʊlɒŋhəvjubiːn]
I've (been) … for … [aɪv … fɔː] and [aɪvbiːn … fɔː]

CUEs: What do you do? (set question), How about you? (follow-up), For, Since, How long have you …?
FUNCTION: Job, Duration (until now)

Travel English

Every overseas travel starts and ends with the ability to

Confirm and Clarify

Can you repeat that?
Could you speak more slowly?
Would you speak more loudly, please?
Would you mind writing that down, please?

Directions

are the single most common source of frustration when traveling abroad. Asking for directions is easy:

Where is (the) …?
Is there a … around here?
Is there a … near here?
Is there a … nearby?

Giving directions is difficult even in our native language, therefore, before you go about explaining, you have to figure out the easiest route to the place in question. Keep your directions simple yet precise. The key to giving good directions is choosing the best *landmark*(s) – a LandMark (LM) is something that is easy to see and recognize:

- *Buildings* are the best LMs: church, gas station, police station, flower shop, bank, bakery, McDonald's, Starbucks, supermarket, etc.
- *Parks* and *car parking lots* make good LMs too;
- *Intersections* and *traffic lights* are also good LMs;

- Street names should be avoided.

We usually say:
At (the) + LM, turn left/right

or you can change the order:

Turn left/right, at (the) + LM

> We usually say THE before the landmark (one specific), except for brand names like McDonald's, Starbucks, 7/11, GAP, Citibank, etc.

Other useful expressions:

Go straight
go across the street = cross the street
go past (the) + LM = pass (the) + LM

It is next to (the) + LM
It is behind (the) + LM
It is in front of (the) + LM
It's between (the) + LM 1 and (the) + LM 2
It's across (the street) from (the) + LM = It's opposite (the) + LM

It's on the left/right (-hand side)

- Excuse me, is there a post office around here?

Yes, there is. Go straight, go past the flower shop and turn left at the 2nd intersection. It is on the left, across from McDonald's.

- Excuse me, where is the nearest convenience store?

Go straight and at the bakery turn right. Go past the post office and the church and turn left at the 1st traffic lights. It is on the left, between the bank and the parking lot.

- Excuse me, is there an ATM near here?

Sure. Cross the street and turn left. Go straight and at the 3rd intersection turn right. It is on the right-hand side, next to the pharmacy.

Restaurant

At restaurants, we usually make *requests* or just say what we *want/would like*:

I would like + food/drink name
    I would like a cup of tea, please.
    I'd like the roast lamb and spinach salad.

Can I have/get + food/drink name
    Can I have a cup of coffee?
    Could I get a double cheeseburger?
    Can I get the check/bill, please?

Making *requests* with "Can/Could I" and "Can/Could you" is something we do all the time when traveling overseas.

Hotel

Can I order room service?
Can I use the hotel pool?
Can I get a wake-up call?
Can you call me a taxi?
Can I have my room cleaned?

Shopping

Can I try it on?
Can I get it in a smaller/bigger size?
Can I get it in black/pink/blue?
Can I pay by credit card?
Could you gift-wrap it, please?

We might also ask for Advice

Should I … or …?
Should I take the bus or take a taxi?
Should I go in the morning or in the afternoon?
Should I exchange money at the airport or the bank?

How should I (get there)?
When should I (go there)?
Where should I (exchange my money)?

and give Advice:

You should take the bus. It is cheaper.
You don't want to go in the morning. It's too crowded.
You could exchange money at the hotel.

That's all, my dear reader. Thank you for taking that journey with me. I wish you a pleasant road ahead and never forget that it's not about the destination but all about the journey.

The End…

About the Author

Vladimir Skenderoff is an English teacher and the author of "by a non-native, for the non-native" series of books on how to learn English:

- Virtually Native

- English Grammar and Functions

- Almost All People

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