

Lesson: Phrases

Learning Target

- Explain the function of phrases in general and their function in specific sentences.

Sentences are made of words, phrases, and clauses. A **phrase** is a word group that does NOT have both a subject and a verb and that functions as a part of speech, such as a noun or modifier (adjective or adverb). There are many different kinds of phrases.

A **noun phrase** is usually made of a noun or pronoun and its modifiers. It stands for a person, place, thing, or idea and functions as a noun: it can be a subject, object, object of a preposition, etc.

The sandy Gulf Coast beaches are home to many animals. *[The phrase acts as the complete subject.]*

Sea turtles lay eggs in nests on **sandy Gulf Coast beaches** every summer. *[The phrase acts as the object of the preposition on.]*

A **verb phrase** includes a main verb and one or more helping verbs. It expresses action or a state of being.

Do they **lay** many eggs?

Yes, they **can lay** hundreds of eggs in one nest.

A **prepositional phrase** is introduced by a preposition and includes a noun or pronoun that is the object of the preposition, as well as any modifiers of that object. A prepositional phrase usually acts as a modifier (an adjective or adverb), adding detail.

The female turtles return **to the beach where they were born**. *[The phrase acts as an adverb modifying return.]*

The nest **under that dune** should hatch next week. *[The phrase acts as an adjective modifying nest.]*

A **participial phrase** includes a participle (a verb form that can be used as an adjective) and any modifiers or objects of the participle.

Incubating for weeks or months, the eggs hold tiny turtles. *[The phrase modifies eggs.]*

The eggs **buried in the sand** are protected from predators. *[The phrase modifies eggs.]*

An **absolute phrase** acts as a modifier. It includes a noun or pronoun and a participle or participial phrase. Absolute phrases typically focus on a specific detail.

One night, **a bright moon shining on the water**, the hatchlings will emerge from the nest.

Their tiny fins making slow headway, the hatchlings will scramble toward the ocean. *[The phrase modifies hatchlings.]*

Check Your Understanding

Identify each boldface word group below as a *noun phrase*, *verb phrase*, *prepositional phrase*, *participial phrase*, or *absolute phrase*. If it is a noun phrase, say whether it is an *appositive phrase*.

1. **The long fishing pier** stands high above the waves. **noun phrase**
2. **Flags flying in the stiff wind**, the boat headed for the pier. **absolute phrase**
3. **Diving for fish**, pelicans suddenly drop into the water. **participial phrase**
4. I see a storm **across the water**. **prepositional phrase**
5. We **have walked** along the shore countless times. **verb phrase**

Add two or more phrases to each of the following sentences to add detail and make them more interesting.

Answers will vary. Students should add at least two phrases to each sentence. Sample answers are given.

6. **Their loud voices sounding like laughter**, seagulls fly **over the beach** and **toward the pier**.
7. **Splashing in the surf**, fish leap **out of the waves**.
8. Jellyfish drift along **with the ocean currents**, **their tentacles hanging below them**.
9. Dolphins cruise **along the sand bar**, **playing and leaping in the waves**.
10. **From the deck and the beach**, we watch them all, **in and around the water**. The long fishing pier stands high above the waves.
11. Flags flying in the stiff wind, the boat headed for the pier.
12. Diving for fish, pelicans suddenly drop into the water.
13. I see a storm across the water.
14. We have walked along the shore countless times.

Add two or more phrases to each of the following sentences to add detail and make them more interesting.

15. Seagulls fly.
16. Fish leap.
17. Jellyfish drift along.
18. Dolphins cruise.
19. We watch them all.