Syntax – Curzan and Adams, ch. 6
What happens when you encounter these sentences? --

1. the horse raced past the barn fell;
2. the man who hunts ducks out occasionally
3. flying planes can be dangerous
Goals of syntax:

not, what is the total set of all possible sentences in a language, but the more interesting questions --

- what constitutes knowledge of language? (what the speaker *knows* about language)
- how is that knowledge acquired
- and how is it put to use?
**Generative grammar** is a theory that explains how language is possible, how any child can learn any language using the same mental blueprint – it has explanatory adequacy.

**Generative grammar** = a set of rules for generate all the sentences of a language.

It explains the possible in language and the impossible.

It explains why *What did you buy?* is a possible English sentence and *What did you buy bread and?* is not.
The sentence as a unit of structure:

obviously there are larger units as well: a conversation, a book, a speech;

and smaller ones, morphemes and phonemes
the hierarchies of a S:

sentence > clause > phrase > word

• every sentence consists of at least one clause

• can you have a sentence with only one word?

principle of structural dependency:

sentence structure in all languages depends on groupings of words rather than linear strings
clauses and sentences

independent clause: may be a sentence itself
• the perplexed students reread the chapter

or it may be joined to another clause:

1. the students were perplexed and they reread the chapter
2. the chapter perplexed the students, so they reread it
3. the students were perplexed; they reread the chapter
Types of dependent clauses

**dependent clause:** (subordinate cl) cannot stand alone; embedded or inserted into an independent clause; modify a constituent in the ind cl or modify the *entire* independent clause

• **adverbial clause:** often introduced by a subordinating conj *(when, because, after, if, although)*

  - *after they reread the chapter, the students felt much less perplexed.*

• **relative clause:** typically introduced by a relative pronoun *(that, which, who, whom, whose)*

  - *The instructor, who loved syntax, tried to may that love contagious.*

• **complementizer clause:** often introduced by *that* or wh- word *(whether, what, when)*

  - *the students thought that the instructor was a little off.*
What are the constituents of this sentence?

*The perplexed students reread the chapter.*

clauses and sentences

**independent clause:** may be a sentence itself –

*the perplexed students reread the chapter*

or it may be joined to another clause:

• *The students were perplexed and they reread the chapter*
• *The chapter perplexed the students, so they reread it*
• *The students were perplexed; they reread the chapter*

dependent clause: (subordinate cl) cannot stand alone; embedded or inserted into an independent clause; modify a constituent in the ind cl or modify the *entire* independent clause
We know that

*the fabulous teacher*

is a noun phrase

and we know that

*teacher fabulous the*

*the teacher fabulous*

are not.

How do we know this?
We know that

*Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*

is on some level a grammatical English sentence.

But we also know that “it does not compute.”

The notion that a sentence must be both grammatical and acceptable, that it must fit our understanding of what constitutes an English utterance and that it also must make some kind of sense.

Can you make sense out of this utterance?

*Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*
Phrase Structure Rules

Basic PS Rules of English:

\[ S \rightarrow (NP/S) \ VP \]

\[ NP \rightarrow (\text{Det}) (\text{Adj}+) \ N \ (\text{PP}+) \]

\[ ADJP \rightarrow (\text{ADV}) \ \text{ADJ} \]

\[ VP \rightarrow (\text{ADVP}+) \ V \ (NP/S) \ (\text{PP}+) \ (\text{ADVP}+) \]

\[ ADVP \rightarrow (\text{ADV}) \ \text{ADV} \]

\[ PP \rightarrow P \ NP \]
**Form and function:** just as a word can look like a noun and function like an adjective, sentence constituents must be analyzed both for their form and their function --

- nominals: all constituents acting like nouns
- adjectivals: all constituents acting like adjs
- adverbials: constituents acting like advs
### Clause types:

#### Nominals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>I heard <em>this weird noise.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>The noise came from <em>in the car.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementizer</td>
<td>I know <em>that the noise came from there.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infinitive phrase</td>
<td>I want <em>to know what the noise is.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gerund phrase</td>
<td><em>Hearing the noise</em> freaked me out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Adjectivals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADJP</td>
<td>I have an <em>incredibly crazy</em> cat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>My cat likes twist-ties <em>from plastic bags.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rel clause</td>
<td>She eats cereal <em>that falls on the floor.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infin clause</td>
<td>She disobeys my command <em>to stop biting my feet.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participial phr</td>
<td>She is a cat <em>possessed by imaginary friends.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverbials:

**ADVP**  She swims in arctic waters *ridiculously often.*

**PP**  She protects her face *with petroleum jelly.*

**NP**  She plans to swim *tomorrow.*

**Adv clause**  Doctors were stunned *when they heard about her.*

**infin phrase**  They ran tests *to figure out how she does it.*

**participial phrase**  She went *swimming in an icy lake.*
A phrase-structure tree diagram:

*Perplexed* students *reread* the *chapter.*
The perplexed students reread the chapter in the book.
Analyzing the NPs *the perplexed students* and *the chapter in the book*, from *The perplexed students reread the chapter in the book.*
Two ways of chunking *old horse farm*:
An NP with two adjectives: *big complicated trees*
We arrange the components in a different hierarch if the NP *big complicated trees* refers to *complicated trees* that are *big* rather than *small*:
when did the event happen?

*The perplexed students reread the chapter over the weekend.*
The unpredictable actress tripped the cop with the prop.

Two readings require two different underlying structures:

The actress trips the cop who has the prop.
The actress uses the prop to trip the cop.
In the NP *old men and women,*

who are you calling old?
An adverbial clause can modify the entire S:

*We studied because we had the test the next day.*

The adverbial whose head word is *because*: it’s the reason why we studied
The adverbial whose head word is *day*: that’s the time when *the test* is scheduled.
Relative clauses:

*I had an epiphany that changed my attitude about grammar.*

The relative clause begins with *that* --
I diagrammed the sentence that the teacher provided.

The relative clause begins with *that*. What’s the difference?
Here the relative is the subject of the clause:

Here the relative is the object of the clause:
A complementizer clause:

introduced by *that*:

*We think that the grammar fairy has all the answers.*
An infinitive phrase:

*We want to know the intricacies of grammar.*
Tense and Aux

an additional node dominated by S
tense is carried by aux, if there is one, or MV if there isn’t an aux

what is the it in It’s raining? It’s three o’clock? It seems to me . . .
empty or dummy subjects: (expletive)
Transformations – a set of rules for going from PS to surface structure

wh- questions    the wh- word is fronted; if there’s no aux, we add dummy DO

   you said x
   what did you say?
   I am not a crook.

negation: not inserted, typically after first aux (or after be) or dummy do is added:

   I want to get out of here fast + neg
   I am getting sleepy

yes-no questions: inversion instead of wh-

   What part of this do you not understand?
tag questions: first aux repeated in tag,
   This makes me look fat, doesn’t it?

active/passive: in passive, d.o. > subj; subj moved to pp after v, passive
verb form (be or get + pp)
   John took me for a ride
   I was (got) taken for a ride (by John).

rel pron deletion (for restrictives):
   I understand the last section that I read
   I understand the last section I read

verb particle movement:
   I looked up the number
   I looked the number up