A Guide to Grammar

FOR **MUMMIES** and Daddies

Brookside's helpful guide to grammar.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test

As part of SATs, year 6 children will now be sitting an English grammar, punctuation and spelling test (SPAG).
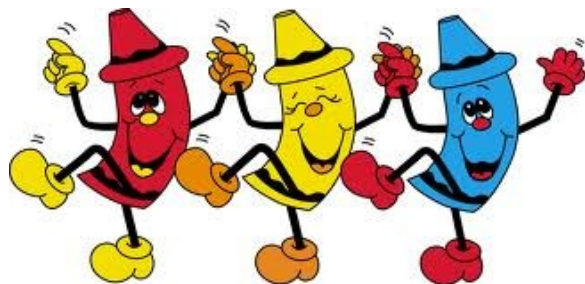
The test will form part of the National Curriculum tests (NCTs) which are taken by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2.

We hope this guide will help you help your child to prepare for the new test.

The Department for Education is introducing the test because they want to make sure that when children leave primary school they are confident in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The test will ensure that primary schools place a stronger focus on the teaching of these skills than in previous years.

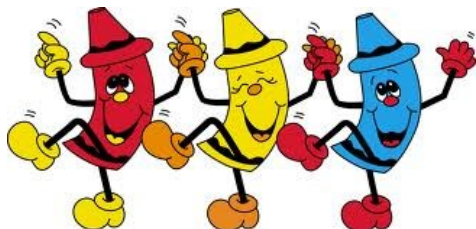|		
tense	The choice between present and past. (English has no future tense.)	He likes it. He liked it.
verb	E.g. be, take, arrive, imagine Verbs are sometimes called 'doing words' because they often name an action that someone does; but this can be confusing, because they also name events (where things simply happen) or states (where nothing changes). Moreover, actions can also be named by nouns. Instead, it is better to identify verbs by their ability to have a tense – either present or past (see also future tense).	He looked out of the window. A nature trail has been designed. Your child will be travelling by coach. Yusuf is tired. It rained all day. (Compare: The journey will take an hour. [noun] His tiredness was easy to understand. [noun])

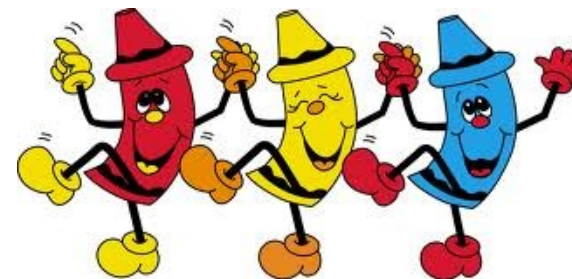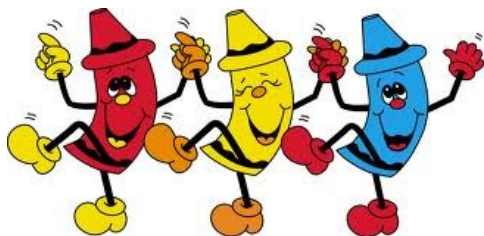|	Definition	Examples
active voice	A verb in the active voice has its usual pattern of subject and object – contrast passive voice.	During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail and learn about the trees, flowers and wildlife in this interesting habitat.
adjective	E.g. *big, extensive, vertical* Adjectives are sometimes called 'describing words' be-cause they pick out single characteristics such as size or colour, but this can be confusing, because verbs, nouns and adverbs can do the same. Instead, it is better to identify adjectives by their uses: ▢ either before a noun (e.g. *big box*) to modify the noun ▢ or after the verb *be* (e.g. *is big*) as its complement.	The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed. [The grounds are extensive.] (Compare: The lamp glowed. [verb] It was such a bright red! [noun] He walked clumsily. [adverb])

adverb	E.g. *quickly, soon, very* Adverbs are often said to describe manner or time, but prepositions, nouns and subordinate clauses can also do this. Instead, it is better to identify adverbs by their uses: they modify the meaning of a verb (or any other word-class except nouns).	Usha went <u>upstairs</u> to play on her computer. (Compare: Usha went <u>up</u> the stairs. [preposition] She arrived this <u>evening</u>. [noun] She arrived <u>when we expected her</u>. [subordinate clause])
adverbial	An adverbial is part of a clause that behaves like an adverb in modifying the verb, and which may itself be an adverb, but may instead be a preposition or a subordinate clause.	... leaving school at <u>9.30am</u> Usha went <u>upstairs to play on her computer.</u>

apostrophe	An apostrophe shows
	
	  either the place of omitted letters (e.g. *I'm* for *I am*)
	
	  or possession (e.g. *Usha's mother*).
		<u>I'm</u> going out, Usha, and I <u>won't</u> be long.
		
		 <u>Usha's</u> mother went out and she was in charge.

subordinate clause	A subordinate clause is subordinate to some word outside itself: it may modify this word (e.g. as a relative clause or as an adverbial), or it may be used as a verb's subject or object. How a subordinate clause fits into the larger sentence is normally marked grammatically, either by a special introductory word such as a conjunction, or by special non-finite forms of the verb.
	
	 However:
	
	  some subordinate clauses have no marking.
	
	  clauses that are directly quoted as 'direct speech' are not subordinate clauses.
		The centre has extensive grounds <u>in which a nature trail has been designed.</u>
		
		 He watched her as <u>she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street.</u>
		
		 A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, <u>leaving school at 9.30am.</u>
		
		 Usha went upstairs <u>to play on her computer.</u>
		
		 She saw <u>an hour had passed</u> (this subordinate clause has no marking)

suffix	A suffix is an 'ending', something added at the end of one word to turn it into another word. (Contrast prefix.)	ha<u>s</u>, leav<u>ing</u>, accompani<u>ed</u>, teach<u>er</u>, assist<u>ant</u>

sentence	All the words in a sentence are held together by purely grammatical links, rather than merely by links of cohesion. A sentence is defined by its grammar, but signalled by its punctuation.	Correct punctuation: A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18th, leaving school at 9.30am. This is an overnight visit. Incorrect punctuation: She loved her computer, she got it for Christmas.
subject	A verb's subject is normally the noun or pronoun which names the 'do-er' or 'be-er'. Unlike the verb's object and complement, the subject normally stands just before it and decides whether or not a present-tense verb takes a suffix *s*. In a question, the subject follows the verb.	The children will follow the nature trail. Usha's mother went out. Will the children follow? Whether it's going to rain is uncertain. A visit has [not: have] been arranged.

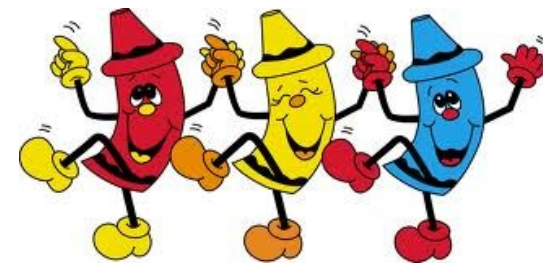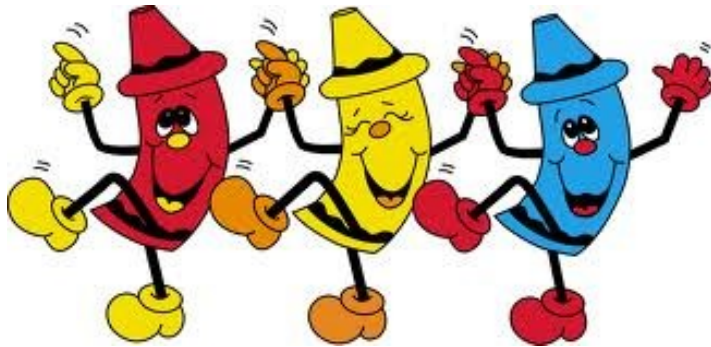| clause	A clause is ◻ either a complete sentence, ◻ or part of a sentence that could be used, with small changes, as a complete sentence. In traditional grammar a clause had to have a finite verb, but modern grammarians generally recognise non-finite clauses as well.	Usha's mother went out and she was in charge. Usha's mother went out and she was in charge. Usha went upstairs to play on her computer. Usha went upstairs to play on her computer. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed.
cohesion	A text has cohesion if its meaning is coherent – i.e. if it is clear how the meanings of its parts fit together. It may contain repeated references to the same person or thing, as shown by the different underlined styles in the example; and the logical relations (e.g. time and cause) between the parts are clear.	A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18th, leaving school at 9.30am. This is an overnight visit. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed. During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail.

cohesive device	Cohesive devices are words that make clear how a text's parts are related to one another. Some words such as determiners and pronouns are especially important for building cohesion because they refer back to earlier words. Other words such as prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs (connectives) make relations clear.	A visit has been arranged <u>for</u> the Year 6 class, <u>to</u> Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, <u>on</u> July 18th, <u>leaving</u> school <u>at</u> 9.30am. <u>This</u> is an overnight visit. ... <u>The</u> centre has extensive grounds <u>in which</u> a nature trail has been designed. <u>During the</u> afternoon, the children will follow <u>the</u> nature trail
complement	A verb's complement (or 'predicative complement') 'completes' the verb's meaning by adding more information about the verb's subject (or, in some cases, its object). Unlike the verb's object, its complement may be an adjective. The verb *be* normally has a complement.	This is <u>an overnight visit.</u> [You make me <u>happy</u>.] It was <u>Wednesday</u>. ... she was <u>in charge.</u>

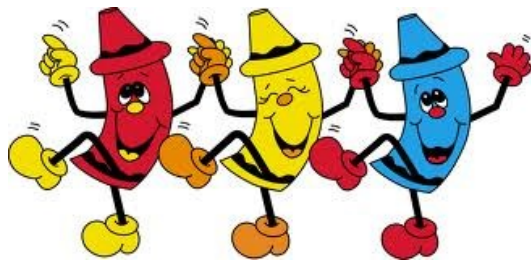| punctuation	Punctuation includes any conventional features of written presentation other than spelling and general layout: the standard punctuation marks (. , ; : ? ! - -- ( ) " '), and also word-spaces, capital letters, apostrophes, paragraph breaks and bullet points. One of the roles of punctuation is to indicate sentence boundaries.	<u>"I'm going out, Usha, and I won't be long,"</u> Mum said<u>.</u>
root word	A root word is a word which does not contain any smaller root words or prefixes or suffixes.	*play, compute,* as in: So she <u>played</u> on the <u>computer.</u>
relative clause	A relative clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun by including it in the clause; for instance, *cake that he had left yesterday* means 'cake like this: she had left it yesterday'.	The centre has extensive grounds <u>in which a nature trail has been designed.</u> She got herself a cake <u>that she had bought yesterday.</u>

present tense	A present-tense verb ('a verb in the present tense') normally names a situation that is true now. It normally has either no suffix or –s (depending on the subject), and is a finite verb.	The centre <u>has</u> extensive grounds. He <u>can</u> swim. When he <u>arrives</u>, he <u>will</u> unpack his bag. Your father <u>tells</u> me that you'<u>re</u> not happy.
possessive	A possessive is normally either a noun followed by an apostrophe and –s, or a possessive pronoun, and names the owner ('possessor') of the noun that it modifies. A possessive acts as a determiner, and must be replaced by an ordinary determiner if it is turned into an *of* phrase.	<u>Tariq's</u> book (the book of Tariq, i.e. that Tariq owns) <u>somebody else's</u> book (the book of somebody else)
pronoun	E.g. *me, him, he, his, himself, who, what, that* A pronoun functions like a noun except that it is harder to modify and grammatically more specialised.	<u>She</u> waved to <u>her</u> mother and watched <u>her</u> as <u>she</u> disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. <u>This</u> is an overnight visit. The centre has extensive grounds in <u>which</u> a nature trail has been designed.

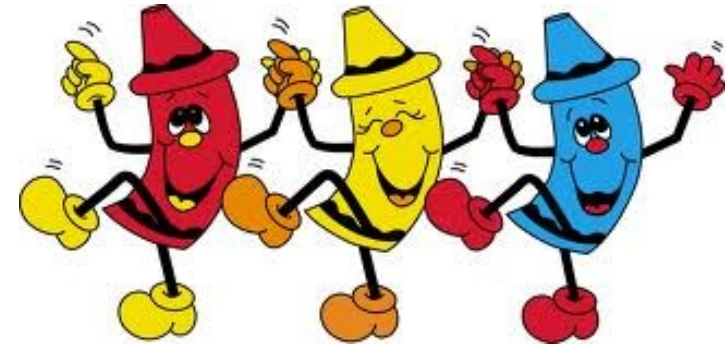|		
conjunction	E.g. *and, or, although, if* A conjunction links a following word or phrase to some other part of the sentence, either in coordination (e.g. … *and* ….) or as a subordinate clause (e.g. … *although* …).	She got herself two biscuits <u>and</u> a cake that she had bought yesterday. She waved to her mother <u>and</u> watched her <u>as</u> she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. We walk <u>before</u> we run. [conjunction] We walk <u>before</u> the age of two. [preposition]
connective	'Connective' is an informal name for words whose main function is to connect the ideas expressed in different clauses; such words may be prepositions, conjunctions or adverbs.	It rained on sports day <u>so</u> we had to compete <u>without</u> worrying <u>about</u> getting wet, <u>but</u> it was great fun <u>because</u> we got really muddy.
Determiner or article	E.g. *the, a, this, any, my* A determiner stands before a noun and any other words that modify the noun. A singular noun such as *boy* or *number* (but not *coffee* or *beauty*) requires a determiner, so we can say *with the boy* but not: *with boy*.	This is <u>an</u> overnight visit. <u>Your</u> child will be travelling by coach and will be accompanied by Mrs Talib, <u>the</u> class teacher, and <u>her</u> teaching assistant, Mrs Medway.

fronted	A word that would normally follow the verb may be 'fronted' to the start of the clause; for instance, a fronted adverbial is an adverbial which has been put at the front of the clause.	During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail
future tense	English has no 'future tense' comparable with its present and past tenses. Reference to future time can be marked in a number of different ways, all of which include a present-tense verb.	It will leave tomorrow. It leaves tomorrow. It may leave tomorrow. It is going to leave tomorrow.
homophone	Two words are homophones if they have the same pronunciation	hear, here
inflection	Inflection is a change ('bending') of morphology which signals a special grammatical classification of the word.	dogs is the plural inflection of dog. went is the past-tense inflection of go.

phrase	A phrase is a group of words containing one word which all the other words help to modify. (One possible notation double-underlines the modified word and single-underlines the rest of the phrase.) A phrase whose modified word is a verb is a clause or sentence.	She waved to her mother. She waved to her mother. She waved to her mother.
plural	A plural noun normally has a suffix s and means more than one example of the noun's basic meaning. There are a few nouns with irregular morphology (e.g. mice, formulae) or irregular meanings.	The children will follow the nature trail and learn about the trees, flowers and wildlife. The centre has extensive grounds. (but not: … a ground)
prefix	A prefix is added at the beginning of a word in order to turn it into another word. (Contrast suffix.)	overnight, disappeared
preposition	E.g. in, of, at, with, by, between A preposition links a following noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence. Unlike conjunctions, they can't link clauses.	She waved to her mother and watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street.

passive voice	A passive verb (a verb 'in the passive voice' – contrast 'active voice') normally has a suffix ed, follows the verb be, and has its normal ('active') object and subject reversed so that the active object is used as the passive subject, and the active subject appears as an optional by phrase. A verb is not 'passive' just because it has a 'passive' meaning – it must be the passive version of an active verb.	A visit was arranged by the school. A visit was arranged. (Compare the active: The school arranged a visit.)
past tense	A past-tense verb ('a verb in the past tense') normally has a suffix ed, names an event or state in the past and is a finite verb. Some verbs have irregular morphology (e.g. was, came) Past tense can also have other meanings.	She waved to her mother and watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. I knew that today was Sunday. If he understood you, he would trust you.

noun	E.g. cat, person, arrival, purpose Nouns – the largest word-class of all – are sometimes called 'naming words' because they name people, places and 'things'; but many 'things' can also be named by other word classes such as verbs and prepositions. Instead, it is better to identify nouns by their possible grammatical uses, as the subject or object of a verb.	A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18th, leaving school at 9.30am. He arrived at last, but his late arrival spoilt everything.
object	A verb's object is normally a noun or pronoun which is found immediately after the verb, and which we expect to find there. Unlike complements, objects can be turned into the subject of a passive verb, and cannot be adjectives.	They designed a nature trail. (Compare: A nature trail was designed) Not: They designed pretty.