

Grammar



A Parents' Guide

A guide to the new national curriculum's grammatical terms for those of us who weren't taught grammar at school.



Many parents were not taught grammar at school and therefore might not be confident with the topic.

The purpose of this guide is to help explain some of the terms, which your son or daughter is expected to know as part of the new national curriculum.

The following terms are covered:

Year 1

Words
Letters vs. Capitals
Punctuation
Full Stops
Exclamation Marks
Singular vs. Plural
Sentences

Year 2

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Adjectives
Verbs
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Year 6

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Ellipsis
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Bullet Points
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WORDS

YEAR 1

Words are used to help us talk to each other.

There are lots and lots of words.

They all have:

a way they are spoken

a way they are spelled

one or more meaning

REMEMBER!

Words help us talk and communicate.



LETTERS VS. CAPITALS **YEAR 1**

Letters and capital letters sound the same when they're spoken...

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

...but they look different.

USE CAPITALS

at the beginning of sentences
at the beginning of people's names
at the beginning of place names
when using 'I' to talk about ourselves

REMEMBER!

Only use capitals when required.



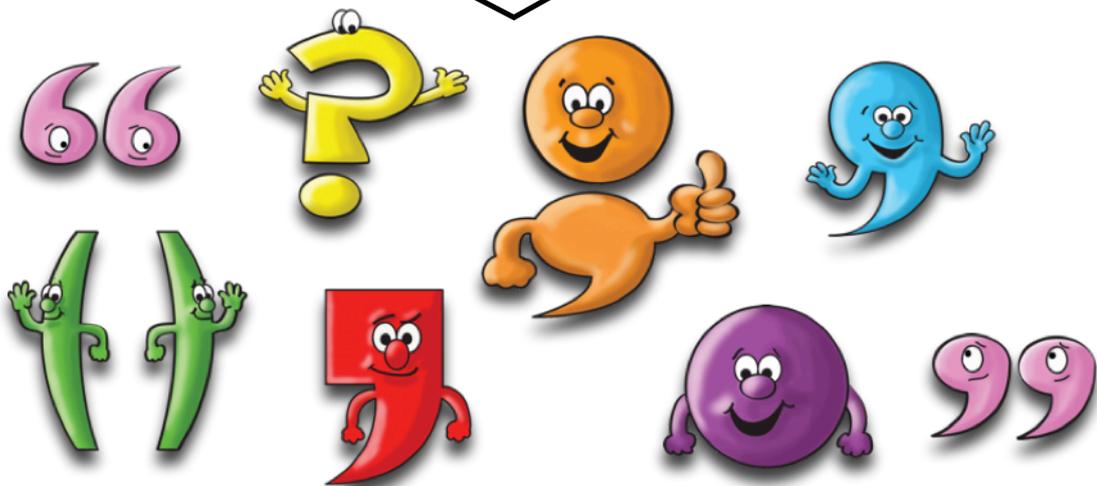
PUNCTUATION

YEAR 1

Punctuation helps us to read sentences.

There are lots of punctuation marks that give us clues about when to pause and how to end sentences.

Don't tell the grown ups, but...



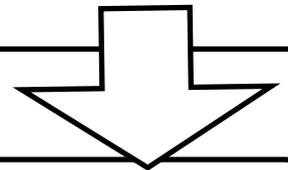
Punctuation marks are really the Punctuation Pals - a group of friendly aliens who help us to communicate.



FULL STOPS

YEAR 1

A full stop lets a reader know when to stop reading and pause.



A full stop goes at the end of a sentence.



FOR EXAMPLE

The man walked
across the road.

The dog chased the
cat.

The full stop
goes here to
show that the
sentence has
finished.

REMEMBER!

A full stop doesn't
just go at the end of a
line - check it makes
sense.



EXCLAMATION MARKS *YEAR 1*

Exclamation marks are used to show strong feeling or emotion.

They're commonly used at the end of a command or to imply shouting.

Exclamation marks show strong emotion.

FOR EXAMPLE

You're in trouble!

How silly this is!

That's a ridiculous decision!

The exclamation mark adds more feeling.

REMEMBER!

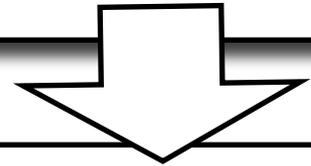
Don't use too many.



QUESTION MARKS

YEAR 1

We use question marks to go at the end of sentences that ask questions.



They will replace the full stop.



FOR EXAMPLE

Where's my supper?

Who are you?

What's your name?

The question marks go here.

REMEMBER!

Questions need a question mark and not a full stop.



SINGULAR VS PLURAL

YEAR 1

Singular means one.

Plural means more than one.

We can normally change a singular word to a plural word by adding 's' or 'es'.

FOR EXAMPLE

book becomes books
cow becomes cows
bus becomes buses
potato becomes potatoes

REMEMBER!

Take care with words that don't become plural in the usual ways.



SENTENCES

YEAR 1

To create a simple sentence, we follow simple rules.

FOR EXAMPLE

The man sneezed loudly.

We need a capital letter and a full stop.

AND

The man sneezed loudly.

It will usually have a subject and a verb.

REMEMBER!

A sentence should be a full thought.



NOUNS

YEAR 2

A noun is the name of a person, place, thing or idea.

David
Rosie
Andy

London
town
pool

chair
pencil
brick

hope
anger
fear

A sentence will normally contain at least one noun, which will be the subject.

FOR EXAMPLE

David is running.

REMEMBER!

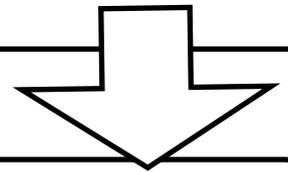
Other nouns in a sentence will be called objects.



ADJECTIVES

YEAR 2

Adjectives are describing words.

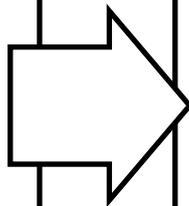


Adjectives give us more information about nouns.

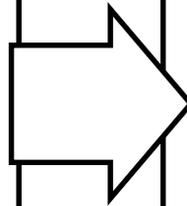


FOR EXAMPLE

the
a
an



silly
pretty
dress



trousers
dress
smell

adjectives

nouns

REMEMBER!

Don't use too many
adjectives in your
writing.



VERBS

YEAR 2

A verb is an action, doing or being word.

The same verb can take different forms. This will depend on how many people, or things are doing it and when it happened. A sentence will normally contain at least one verb.

FOR EXAMPLE

Harry broke a pencil.

The verb is 'broke' because that's what Harry actually did.

REMEMBER!

Verbs let us know what's happening.



TENSE

YEAR 2

When a verb is affected by when something happens, this is called tense.

Describing something happening now is present tense.

FOR EXAMPLE

First person singular = I am
Second person singular = You are

Describing something that has already happened is past tense.

FOR EXAMPLE

First person singular = I was
Second person singular = You were

REMEMBER!

Make sure you get the right tense in your sentence.



PROGRESSIVE

YEAR 2

The progressive form of a verb usually describes things that are happening (or in progress).

The progressive is created by combining the verb 'to be' with the verb's present participle (usually ending in ing).

FOR EXAMPLE

John is talking in class.

to be

present participle

Because 'is' is present tense, this is an example of the present progressive.

REMEMBER!

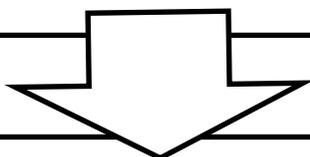
We can change 'is' to 'was' to create the past progressive.



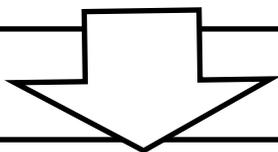
ADVERBS

YEAR 2

Adverbs are describing words.



Adverbs tell us when, where, how, in what manner and to what extent a verb is performed.



FOR EXAMPLE

The man ran quickly.

verb

adverb

REMEMBER!

They can also affect adjectives or other adverbs.



NOUN PHRASES

YEAR 2

A noun phrase is a group of words with a noun as its head.

We can build a noun phrase by adding words before it:

Cars
Convertible cars
New convertible cars

are lots of fun.
are lots of fun.
are lots of fun.

or after it

Cars with seats
Cars with leather seats

are lots of fun.
are lots of fun.

REMEMBER!

Find the noun that affects the verb to find the head.



STATEMENTS

YEAR 2

A statement is a sentence that gives information and has a subject and a verb.

The subject will usually come first in a statement.

Contains the subject

Contains the verb

Bill
The cat
Chairs

drinks milk.
hates Bill.
are comfortable.

REMEMBER!

Statements are the most common type of sentence.



QUESTIONS

YEAR 2

Questions are a type of sentence that ask for information.

There are different types of questions.

Yes/no questions, or closed questions only need a yes or no answer.

Some questions start with who, what, why, when, where, or how and require more information.

Alternative questions need an answer connected to the question.

REMEMBER!

Statements can often be turned into questions by adding a question mark.



EXCLAMATIONS

YEAR 2

Exclamations are sentences that show strong feeling.

To be considered an exclamation, the sentence must start with "how" or "what". It should also contain a verb.

FOR EXAMPLE

How beautiful you look today!

What a ridiculous decision you have made here!

REMEMBER!

Don't forget your exclamation mark.



COMMANDS

YEAR 2

Commands give instructions.

They use the imperative form of verbs.

When using commands, the sentence doesn't always need a subject.

FOR EXAMPLE

Clean my shirt.

It is suggested that 'You' would be the subject (You clean my shirt).

REMEMBER!

Commands can work well with exclamation marks.



SUFFIXES

YEAR 2

A suffix is a group of letters, placed at the end of a word to alter the meaning or function.

Different suffixes affect words in different ways.

FOR EXAMPLE

child + less = childless

The addition of the suffix 'less' changes the noun to an adjective.

FOR EXAMPLE

banana + s = bananas

The addition of the suffix 's' makes the noun plural.

REMEMBER!

Suffixes always go at the end.



APOSTROPHES

YEAR 2

Apostrophes have two main uses.

An apostrophe for contraction tells us one or more letters have been replaced by an apostrophe.

FOR EXAMPLE

I don't care.

An apostrophe for possession tells us that something belongs to something else.

FOR EXAMPLE

Dave's iPad.

REMEMBER!

Don't use apostrophes to show plurals.



COMMAS

YEAR 2

Commas can help to separate items in lists.

When separating items in lists, commas are placed between all of the items apart from the last two, which are normally separated by a conjunction.

FOR EXAMPLE

This sandwich has cheese,
bacon, tomatoes and
bananas.

REMEMBER!

Commas have other
uses too.



COMPOUND SENTENCES

YEAR 2

Compound sentences are a multi clause sentence. They are formed when we join two main clauses.

We join the two main clauses with a co-ordinating conjunction such as 'and', 'but' and 'or'.

FOR EXAMPLE

My friend bought a dog and it bit him.

REMEMBER!

We can often replace a co-ordinating conjunction with a semi-colon.



CONSONANTS VS VOWELS

YEAR 3

A, E, I, O and U are vowels.

Vowels are letters that make a sound without the throat or mouth closing.

All other letters are consonants.

It's important to know the difference so we can use the correct article: 'a' or 'an'.

We would use 'a' if the word begins with a consonant.
e.g. a cat

We would use 'an' if the word begins with a vowel.
e.g. an octopus

REMEMBER!

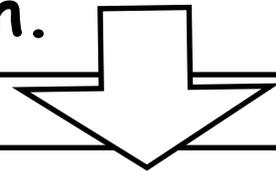
Beware of the letter h!



WORD FAMILIES

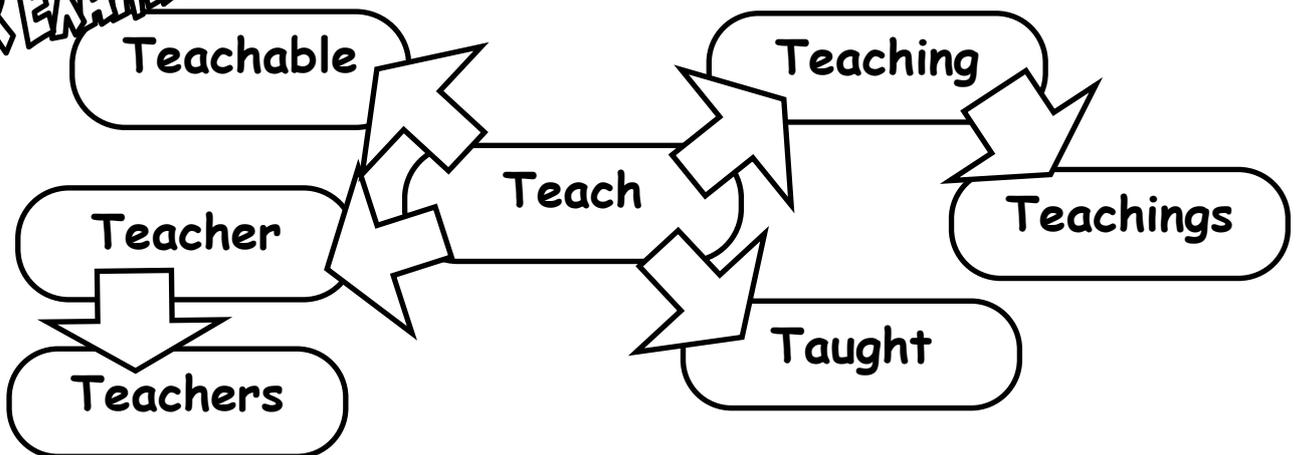
YEAR 3

Word families are based on common words. They can be related through form, meaning, or both.



We can take nouns or verbs and add prefixes or suffixes to easily create word families. There will be a stem or root word.

FOR EXAMPLE



REMEMBER!

Teach is the stem or root word.



CLAUSES

YEAR 3

A clause is a group of words that contains a verb, or has a verb as its head.

The two main clause types are main and subordinate. A main clause can make sense on its own as it will have a subject and a verb.

FOR EXAMPLE

We went for a game of tennis.

A subordinate clause always needs more information and needs to be attached to a main clause.

FOR EXAMPLE

after we had lunch

REMEMBER!

A subordinate clause can go in different places in a sentence.



CONJUNCTIONS

YEAR 3

Conjunctions are linking words. There are two types of conjunction.

Co-ordinating conjunctions, such as 'and', 'but', and 'or'. They link two balanced clauses in a compound sentence.

FOR EXAMPLE

I like tennis and I like squash.

Subordinating conjunctions, such as 'when', 'before', 'after', 'while' and 'because'.

They introduce subordinate clauses.

FOR EXAMPLE

when you do that

REMEMBER!

Conjunctions can connect your ideas.



PREFIXES

YEAR 3

A prefix is a group of letters, placed at the start of a word to alter the meaning or function.

Different prefixes affect words in different ways.

FOR EXAMPLE

super + market = supermarket

The addition of the prefix 'super' makes the market bigger.

un + interested = uninterested

The addition of the prefix 'un' flips the words meaning to mean the opposite.

REMEMBER!

Prefixes always go at the beginning.



PERFECT

YEAR 3

The perfect form of a verb represents a situation resulting from a past event.

The perfect is created by combining the verb 'to have' with the verb's past participle.

FOR EXAMPLE

John has talked in class.

to have

past participle

Because 'has' is present tense, this is an example of the present perfect.

REMEMBER!

We can change 'has' to 'had' to create the past perfect.



PREPOSITIONS

YEAR 3

A preposition is a word that suggests how one part of a clause relates to another part.

Prepositions are words like:

above, below, across, upon, beneath, of,
against, into, within, on, like, around

Prepositions normally precede a noun.

FOR EXAMPLE

Under the bridge, the man waited
for the goats.

REMEMBER!

Prepositional phrases do
the same job, but consist of
more than one word.



INVERTED COMMAS YEAR 3

When writing direct speech, we place inverted commas around what has been said.

FOR EXAMPLE

"My name is Julie," said the new girl.

Don't forget to place a comma inside the inverted commas.

REMEMBER!

When writing paragraphs of speech, we write opening inverted commas for each new paragraph, but don't write the closing ones until the end.



ARTICLES

YEAR 4

Articles don't really have a meaning of their own, but they affect the sentence they are a part of.

There are two types of article.

The definite article

the

When 'the' is used, it generally indicates the noun is familiar or specific.

The indefinite article

a or an

When 'a' or 'an' is used it normally gives less emphasis or shows less importance.

REMEMBER!

Articles are determiners.

ADVERBIALS

YEAR 4

Adverbials modify verbs. They tell us something about the clause of which they are a part.

They can be single words, phrases, or clauses.

Where?

When?

How?

words

here

usually

quickly

phrases

to work

for a day

by train

clauses

walking in
Spain

after we
had eaten

as he
always did

REMEMBER!

A fronted adverbial is always followed by a comma.

DETERMINERS

YEAR 4

A determiner will normally give more information about a noun.

Common determiners are

a/an, the
this, these
my, your
some, many

articles
demonstratives
possessives
quantifiers

They can determine whether a noun is singular or plural; how definite or specific a noun is, or how many.

REMEMBER!

Find the noun that affects the verb to find the head.



PRONOUNS

YEAR 4

Pronouns are words used in place of nouns or noun phrases.

Personal pronouns are the most common type.

FOR EXAMPLE

I - first person singular
you - second person singular
he/she - third person singular
we - first person plural
you - second person plural
they - third person plural

Verbs can react differently, depending on the pronoun that has been used.

REMEMBER!

Pronouns help to avoid repetition.



POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

YEAR 4

Possessive pronouns are used to show ownership.

FOR EXAMPLE

mine, yours, his, hers, their,
ours, its

'Its' doesn't require a possessive apostrophe.

When possessive words are determiners, they often change form.

FOR EXAMPLE

mine becomes my
yours becomes your

AMBIGUITY

YEAR 5

Ambiguity can happen when a word in a sentence has more than one meaning.

FOR EXAMPLE

We all saw her duck.

The word duck could be a noun (as in the lady's pet duck), or the word could be a verb.

Ambiguity can also happen due to sentence structure.

FOR EXAMPLE

John bathed his dog wearing blue trousers.

It isn't clear if John is wearing blue trousers whilst washing his dog, or if his dog is wearing blue trousers whilst having a bath.



AUXILIARY VERBS

YEAR 5

Auxiliary verbs are verbs that combine with other verbs to make a complete verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are
Be: am, is, are, was, were, being, been
Have: has, have, had, having
Do: does, do, did

They help express the tense, voice, or mood of a sentence.

FOR EXAMPLE

I am working.

used to make the tense continuous

Jim and Sam have seen the film.

used to make the present perfect and past perfect tense

I do not like tennis.

used to form negatives or questions

MODAL VERBS

YEAR 5

Modal verbs can reflect the probability of whether or not something is going to happen.

The main modal verbs are
can, could, ought, may, must, might,
would, will, shall, should

Modal verbs are finite verbs. They have a subject and can stand on their own.

FOR EXAMPLE

That animal might be dangerous.

Subject Modal verb

You must.

BRACKETS

YEAR 5

We use brackets to provide an aside or give extra information in a sentence.



The sentence should always make sense without the extra information.

FOR EXAMPLE



The boys (five in all) wanted to play football.

REMEMBER!

Make sure full stops go outside the brackets if they are at the end of a sentence.



COHESION

YEAR 5

Cohesion is something a paragraph has when its ideas are clearly linked.

Cohesion can be created through determiners and pronouns referring back to earlier words.

The teacher was looking forward to meeting her new class. She was also nervous.

The pronoun 'she' refers back to the teacher.

OR

My uncle eats four pies a day. Consequently, he's overweight.

The adverb 'consequently' tells us the weight is a result of the pies.



RELATIVE CLAUSES

YEAR 5

A relative clause is a subordinate clause that refers back to a noun or noun phrase.

It usually does this by using a relative pronoun. A relative clause can be used with the subject of a sentence.

The lady, who makes a lot of noise, should be quiet.

The relative pronoun 'who' refers back to 'The lady' - the subject of the sentence. The relative clause can also be used with the object of a sentence

The school banned mobile phones that can access the internet.

Phones are an object of this sentence, but the pronoun 'that' refers to the phones.



DASHES

YEAR 5

Dashes can show an interruption, or parenthesis in a sentence.

Dashes can be used in pairs or on their own. The interruption will tend to be more aggressive than with commas or brackets.

FOR EXAMPLE

The teachers want what's best for us - or so they say.

REMEMBER!

The above dash is an em dash. An en dash can be used to show sequence.



PARENTHESIS

YEAR 5

Brackets and dashes can be used for parenthesis, but so can commas. Commas can be less forceful.

Any words inside the parenthesis can be left out and will still leave a meaningful sentence.

FOR EXAMPLE

The sandwich, made by my mother, was tasty.

The sentence would still be meaningful without the section in between the commas.

REMEMBER!

Commas are normally the best choice for parenthesis if you want to be more subtle.



ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

YEAR 6

An action within a clause can be expressed in one of two ways: active or passive voice.

The active voice has the subject as the active part

The mouse ate the cheese.

In this example, the mouse is doing something. It is eating the cheese; the mouse is active. The passive voice has the subject acted upon.

The cheese was eaten by the mouse.

In this example, the cheese is the subject, but it is passive. The mouse is still doing the eating and takes attention away from the subject.



SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

YEAR 6

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings.

FOR EXAMPLE

big and large
talk and speak
small and tiny

Synonyms aren't always interchangeable, so make sure you understand a word's meaning.

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings.

FOR EXAMPLE

fat and thin
helpful and unhelpful
decent and indecent

We can often create antonyms by adding prefixes like 'un' and 'in'.



SUBJECT VS. OBJECT

YEAR 6

The subject of a sentence will normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.



We would normally expect a subject to go before a verb.

An object will also normally be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.



We would normally expect an object to go after a verb.

REMEMBER!

The subject is what the sentence is about. It can affect the form of the verb.



ELLIPSIS

YEAR 6

An ellipsis is used to show an omission of expected words.

Clever writers can use an ellipsis to create drama and tension. In this instance, we would use three dots.

FOR EXAMPLE

The man stopped...

In this example, the omission of any text after the statement makes us wonder why the man has stopped. However, we don't always need the dots.

John watched his mother and went over to help.

FOR EXAMPLE

The omission of the word 'he' before 'went' is an ellipsis, but doesn't require three dots.



SEMI-COLONS YEAR 6

A semi-colon can be used to join closely connected main clauses.

FOR EXAMPLE

I really enjoy playing football; it's the best game in the world.

The clauses at either side of the semi-colon could be short sentences. Semi-colons can therefore sometimes replace conjunctions.

We can also use semi-colons in lists where commas are already in use.

FOR EXAMPLE

The teams playing came from Harrogate, North Yorkshire; Hastings, East Sussex and Ipswich, East Anglia.



COLONS

YEAR 6

A colon will introduce a list or an explanation.

It can be used in place of the following words/
phrases:

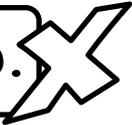
Such as...

Include/including...

They are...

A colon shouldn't be used if it's not required.

FOR EXAMPLE

The ingredients include: jam, flour and soap. 

The example is incorrect. We should use
'include' OR the colon.

REMEMBER!

Colons are a rare
punctuation mark.



BULLET POINTS

YEAR 6

Bullet points are used to highlight important pieces of information.



They will typically follow a colon.

We should use full stops and capital letters if the points form full sentences.

REMEMBER!

These suggestions are guidelines and not rules, but be consistent.



HYPHENS

YEAR 6

Hyphens can be used in compound words, to join prefixes to other words and to show word breaks.

Hyphens can show that words have a combined meaning. This can help us to avoid ambiguity.

FOR EXAMPLE

A first-half goal
(a goal scored in the first half)

VS.

A first half goal
(the first time that part of a goal has been scored)

REMEMBER!

Don't confuse
hyphens with dashes.



SUBJUNCTIVE

YEAR 6

English has three main forms or moods.

The
indicative

Asks
questions
or states
facts

The
imperative

Gives
commands
or
requests

The
subjunctive

Refers
to
possibilities

The subjunctive will use the root or stem of the verb and is more noticeable when using the third person singular.

FOR EXAMPLE

I suggest that she accept our terms.

Note that the verb form would usually be 'accepts'.

REMEMBER!

The subjunctive can sound very formal.

