



The Poetry of Phrases Foundation Lesson

Using the “Phrase Toolbox” as a resource, try writing poems that have the following grammatical structures. Choose a different subject each time you write one.

Pattern #1

absolute phrase
absolute phrase
absolute phrase

independent clause
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase

Example:

*His glowing fur ruffling in the breeze
his eyes burning like coals
his muscles rippling like ocean waves
the tiger paced
in the cage
in the night
in the gloom
in the fire
of his rage.*

Pattern #2

gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.
gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme
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finish the sentence with a rhyme.
gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.

Example:

*Toasting in the hot sun
is a lot of fun.
Dipping in the crystal fountain
seems better than climbing a mountain.
Sipping on an icy drink
lets you hear the sound of a refreshing clink.
Relaxing with good friends
is the way a summer day ends.*

Pattern #3

independent clause with an appositive phrase in it
participial phrase
participial phrase
participial phrase
participial phrase
participial phrase

Example:

*The sky, a dark cauldron full of storm clouds, boils and bubbles,
sparkling with lightening
glittering with glimpses of stars
shrouded in fog
crackling with electricity
waiting for the storm to burst.*

Pattern #4

a subordinate clause
an independent clause
an infinitive phrase and a prepositional phrase
a final independent clause.

Example:

*When I grow up
I want
To dance over a rainbow
To climb above the clouds
To soar beside the birds
To sail with the stars
These are the dreams of my heart.*



Phrase Toolbox

Phrases are groups of words that do not contain both a subject and a verb. Collectively, the words in the phrases function as a single part of speech.

Prepositional phrase

A preposition plus its object and modifiers.

Prepositions

To, around, under, over, like, as, behind, with, outside, etc.

Prepositional phrases may function as adjectives or as adverbs.

Adjective prepositional phrase

Adjective prepositional phrases tell *which one, what kind, how many, and how much*, or give other information about a noun, a pronoun, a noun phrase or a noun clause.

*The store **around the corner** is painted green.* (Which store is it? The store around the corner.)

*The girl **with the blue hair** is angry.*

Adverb prepositional phrase

Adverb prepositional phrases tell *how, when, where, why, to what extent, or under what condition* about a verb, an adjective, an adverb, an adverb phrase, or an adverb clause.

*Oscar is painting his house **with the help of his friends**.* (How is he painting his house? With the help of his friends.)

*Sally is coloring **outside the lines**.*

Infinitive phrase

The word “to” plus a verb. Infinitive phrases can function as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns.

***To dance gracefully** is my ambition.* (subject of sentence)

*Her plan **to become a millionaire** fell through when the stock market crashed.* (modifies plan; functions as an adjective)

*She wanted **to become a veterinarian**.* (noun – direct object of “wanted”)

*John went to college **to study engineering**.* (tells why he went, so it’s an adverb)

Appositive phrase

Renames, or identifies, a noun or pronoun. When it adds information that is nonessential, it is set off by commas.

*My teacher, **a woman with curly hair**, is very fat.*

*Bowser, **the dog with the sharp teeth**, is coming around the corner.*

Participial phrase

A participle is a verb form (past or present) functioning like an adjective. The phrase is the participle plus its modifiers.

Blinded by the light, Sarah walked into the concert hall.

Swimming for his life, John crossed the English Channel.

A **gerund** is an “-ing” verb form functioning as a noun. The phrase is the gerund plus its complements and modifiers.

Walking in the moonlight is a romantic way to end a date. (subject of a sentence)

He particularly enjoyed **walking in the moonlight with his girlfriend**. (direct object)

He wrote a poem about **walking in the moonlight**. (object of the preposition)

Walking the dog is not my favorite task. (subject)

An absolute phrase (also called a *nominative absolute*) is a group of words consisting of a noun or pronoun, an “ing” or “ed” verb form, and any related modifiers. Absolute phrases modify the whole sentence rather than a particular part of it. They are always set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma or pair of commas (or dashes) because they are parenthetical elements. An absolute phrase, very simply put, contains a noun or pronoun followed by a participle. Absolute phrases are valuable in constructing concise, layered sentences.

Their minds whirling from the avalanche of information provided by their teacher, the students made their way thoughtfully to the parking lot.

His head pounding, his hands shaking, his heart filled with trepidation, the young man knelt and proposed marriage to his sweetheart.

The two lovers walked through the garden, **their faces reflecting the moonlight, their arms twined about each other, their footsteps echoing in the stillness of the night**.

Note: An independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a sentence. A dependent, or subordinate, clause, has a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought. It often begins with a subordinating conjunction such as *when*, *because*, *although*, *while*, *since*, etc.