Grammar and punctuation glossary

This glossary is to give you an understanding of the grammar and punctuation vocabulary your children will be introduced to.    
Glossary of grammar vocabulary  
  
Adjective  
Adjectives give us more information about nouns.  
For example: A tall giraffe. The weather grew cold.  
   
Adverb  
Most adverbs, as their name suggests, tell us more about verbs. Adverbs like these are often formed by adding ‘-ly’ to an adjective.  
For example: The troll ate ravenously. The adverb 'ravenously' tells you how the troll was eating.  
  
Apostrophes     '  
Apostrophes have two uses:  
·  to indicate a missing letter or letters in a shortened word.  For example: didn't (did not); we'd (we would).  
·   to show what someone or something owns or possesses. For example: the extra-terrestrial’s toenails (the toenails of the extra-terrestrial). There is no apostrophe in ordinary plurals like tomatoes and videos.   
When the noun is plural and already ends in s, you add an apostrophe by itself.  For example: the cities' cathedrals; in three weeks' time.  
When a person's name ends in s, you add an apostrophe followed by s if you normally say an extra s in speaking. But you just add an apostrophe by itself when you do not normally say the s in speaking.  For example: St Thomas's Hospital; Achilles' armour.  
   
Clause  
A clause is a part of a sentence that has its own verb, e.g. I ran to the shop.  
Main clause    
A sentence can contain one or more main clauses, linked by a conjunction such as and, but, or, or yet, or by a semicolon.  
For example: We approached cautiously; the lioness was beginning to stir.  
Subordinate clause  
A subordinate clause begins with a subordinating conjunction such as because, if, or when, and it can come before or after the main clause.  
For example: Because they eat aphids, ladybirds are useful in the garden.  
Relative clause  
A relative clause explains or describes something that has just been mentioned, and is introduced by that, which, who, whom, whose, when, or where.  
For example: The book, which Tolkien wrote for his children, was an instant success.  
   
Comma  
Commas are used:  
·   To mark a pause in a sentence, especially to separate a subordinate clause from the main clause.  For example: When the howling stopped, we ventured out from the cave.  
·   To separate items in a list or series. For example: I've packed a bikini, flippers, snorkel, and a periscope.    
  
Command  
A command is a sentence which gives an order. An exclamation is a sentence ending with an exclamation mark.  
For example: Come and see the ice beginning to thaw!  
  
Conjunctions  
Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet, although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas.  
  
Coordinating conjunctions  
Coordinating conjunctions join words or clauses which are of equal importance in a sentence. They form compound sentences.  For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet (Would you prefer tea and biscuits, or coffee and cake?)  
  
Subordinating conjunctions  
Subordinating conjunctions are used to link a main and a dependent clause. They are used to form complex sentences.  For example: although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas (Mira felt brave because she had her lucky pebble.)  
  
Connectives  
Connectives are used to link ideas in a piece of writing. They often occur at the start of a sentence and connect it with a previous sentence or paragraph.  For example: moreover, nevertheless, finally, furthermore, and, thus (Nevertheless, he still remains popular with his millions of fans and continues to have hit records all over the world.)  
  
Consonant  
Every letter in the English alphabet that is not a vowel.  
  
Determiner  
These little words are like precise adjectives that help pin down the exact number of nouns; a boy, the boy, four boys, all boys. They are always positioned in front of any other words that modify a noun. They are very commonly used (a, the, it, his, her, this, our, few, each, every)  
  
Ellipsis  ...  
An ellipsis is used to show that one or more words have been missed out or that a sentence is not finished.  For example: "No! Don't tell Dad about the ..."  
  
Exclamation mark  !  
You use an exclamation mark to indicate shouting, surprise, or excitement in direct speech.  
For example: 'Stop! Don't drink! The goblet is poisoned!'  
It can also be used to express surprise, alarm, or excitement in a narrative.  
For example: The sun was coming up. She must hurry! Soon the spell would wear off!  
  
Full stop  .  
A full stop shows where a sentence ends, when the sentence is neither a question nor an exclamation.  For example: Our story begins in 1914, on the eve of the First World War.  
Full stops go within quotation marks in direct speech.  
For example: He said, 'I'll meet you outside the cinema. ‘  
Full stops go within parentheses, when these surround a complete sentence.  For example: The waiter arrived with a plate of toast. (I had ordered waffles.)  
  
Homophone  
A noun with the same sound as another.  
For example: son and sun  
  
Hyphen -  
Hyphens connect two or more words which make up a compound noun or adjective.  
For example: close-up; an ultra-huge sandwich.  
  
Inverted commas  "  "  
Inverted commas occur in pairs and can surround a single word or phrase, or a longer piece of text.  For example: "Look!" said a voice behind me. "Look at the sky!"  
Inverted commas are also known as speech marks, quotation marks, or (informally) quotes.   
  
Mnemonics  
Memory joggers such as a rhyme, a phrase or a shape.  
For example, seeing a dinosaur in the shape of a letter d to help your child to associate the dinosaur with the letter and sound d. BECAUSE- Big Elephants Can’t Always Understand Small Elephants  
  
Model verbs

A modal verb is a special type of [verb](http://www.theschoolrun.com/powerful-verbs-explained). They are used to show the level of possibility, indicate ability, show obligation or give permission. Modal verbs behave differently to ‘ordinary’ verbs.

The most common modal verbs are: will, would, should, could, may, can, shall, ought to, must, might.  
  
Nouns  
Nouns are used to name people, places, or things and tell you who or what a sentence is about.

Common noun  
Common nouns name people or things in general. Common nouns only begin with a capital letter when they start a sentence.  For example: dancer, lizard, sandwich, television.  
  
Proper noun  
Proper nouns give the name of a specific person, place or thing. Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter.  For example: Max, Antarctica, Hallowe'en, Friday.  
  
Collective noun  
Collective nouns name groups of people or things.  For example: a team of athletes, a herd of sheep, a swarm of bees.  
  
Abstract noun  
An abstract noun is a thing that cannot be seen or touched, such as an idea, a quality or a feeling.  For example: happiness, truth, friendship.  
  
Pronoun  
Pronouns are used to replace a noun in a sentence or clause, and help to avoid having to repeat words. E.g. he, she, they, it, her, his.  
  
Question mark ?  
Question marks are used to mark a sentence that is a question. Question marks usually come at the end of a sentence.  For example: Are there wild animals in this wood?  
  
Question  
A question is a sentence which ends with a question mark.  
For example: When would the ice begin to thaw?  
  
Sentence  
A sentence is a group of words that contains a verb. It should make sense on its own. In writing, a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. It can contain just one clause, or several clauses joined by conjunctions or punctuation.  
  
Simple sentence  
A simple sentence consists of one main clause.  For example: The cat is sleeping.  
  
Compound sentence  
A compound sentence consists of two or more main clauses joined by conjunctions such as, and, or,  but. For example: The cat is sleeping but the dog is awake.  
  
Complex sentence  
A complex sentence contains a main clause and at least one other clause. The two clauses are joined by conjunctions.  
  
Semicolon  ;  
You use a semicolon to mark a break in a sentence that is longer, or more important, than a break made with a comma:  For example: The castle was desolate; no one had lived there for three centuries or more.  Semicolons can separate a series of connected clauses introduced by a colon.  For example: There were three clues: there was mud on the carpet; the door had been forced; and the air in the room smelled of fish.  A single semicolon can also separate two clauses.  For example: You bring cups and plates; I'll bring juice and sandwiches.  
  
Tense  
The form of a verb that shows when something happens in the past, present and future.  
·      Present tense  (I am walking)  
·      Past tense (I have walked)  
·      Future tense (I will walk)  
  
Verb  
A doing word! It can describe an action or process (for example: dive, chew, heal, thaw), a feeling or state of mind (for example: worry, think, know, believe), or a state (for example: be, remain). A sentence usually contains at least one verb.  
  
Vowels  
The letters a, e, i, o, u in the English alphabet