WHat is Syntax ?

1. Syntax :

Syntax is a part of linguistics that studies sentence structure. It is the set of rules for arranging words into meaningful sentences. It derives from the Greek term *syntaxix*: arrangement. It is s the order or arrangement of words and phrases to form proper sentences. The most basic syntax follows a subject + verb + direct object formula. That is, "Jillian hit the ball." Syntax allows us to understand that we wouldn't write, "Hit Jillian the ball." but we can say:

e.g. *Mary is pretty*
Is Mary pretty?

 The real joy in syntax comes with the ability to compose sentences in a variety of different ways. We can rearrange adjectives and adverbs, insert phrases, and more. Let's take a look at syntax in writing examples.

2. Difference between Morphology and Syntax :

Both are aspects of language but,

Morphology	Syntax
Deals with word formation out of morphemes	Deals with phrase and sentence formation out of words.

3. What is a Sentence ?

The sentence as a linguistic concept has been defined differently in more than 200 ways :

A common traditional definition of a sentence is that it is : a group of words that expresses a thought. However , the problem relies in defining a thought because a phrase also expresses a thought.

e.g.

phrase : an egg

Sentence :   I closed the door because I was cold. (expresses 2 thoughts)

Another definition states that a sentence is : a set of words containing *subject + predicate*

subject	*predicate*
Topic of sentence	What is said about the verb

Syntax has to deal with :   Word order
Agreement
Complements
Hierarchical structure

A. Word order	C . How many Complements	
• I want these books • Want I these books ?	**a)** I give Mary a book	**b)** I see Mary a book
	c) I see her	**d)** I see she
B.Agreement	**D. Hierarchical structure**	
• He wants this book • I want these books • He want this book • I want this books	a) We need more (intelligent leaders)	b) We need (more intelligent) leaders

Syntax is not about meaning. Sentences can have no meaning/ sense but still grammatically correct.
e.g.

| A. Colourless ideas sleep furiously | B. Sleep ideas colourless furiously green |

Though both sentences have no meaning but still sentence (A) is grammatically correct and (B) is incorrect.

4. Parts of speech:
Words can be categorized into parts of speech based on morphological, syntactic and semantic properrties :

Parts of Speech

a. **Lexical categories**   b. **word classes**
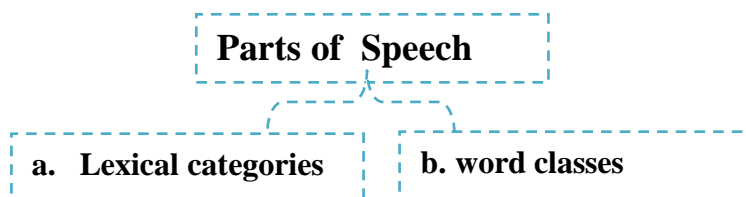
The five lexical categories are: Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, and Preposition. They carry meaning, and often words with a similar (synonym) or opposite meaning (antonym) can be found.

Note : there is a sort of arbitrariness in any such classification. For example, should my be classified as a pronoun or as a determiner ?

Should numerals / participles/ auxiliarie verbs be classified as a pronoun or as a separate category. If « he » is a pronoun, should « do » be a pro-verb ?

This refers to how words are arranged :

I. **Open class**	II. **Closed class**
a. **Nouns**	a. **Determiners**
b. **Verbs**	b. **Auxiliary verbs**
c. **Adjectives**	c. **Pronouns**
d. **Adverbs**	d. **Propsitions**
	e. **Conjunctions**

5. **Syntactic Tree Diagram:** helps students develop skills in syntactically analyzing sentences, identifying their key constituents, and creating hierarchical tree diagrams of such sentences.
   Ex: Tree structures are very easy.
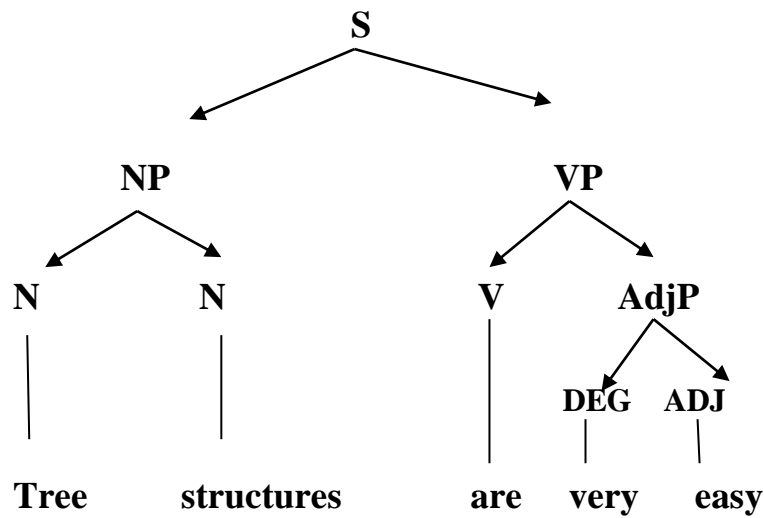
S: Sentence
NP: Nominal Phrase
VP: Verbal Phrase
V: Verb
Adj P: Adjectival Phrase
DEG: Degree adverb
ADJ: Adjective
For more details **try these links:**

- **https://elearning.cpp.edu/learning-objects/syntactic-tree-structures/**
- **https://achsstephens.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/2/2/13224719/how-to-build-a-tree-diagrams-answer-key-for-homework-and-review1.pdf**
- **https://blogs.umass.edu/eba/files/2011/08/201Fall-Extra-Syntax-Practice-AK1.pdf**

- **Exercise:** Try drawing tree structures for the following sentences using the phrase structure rules
  (1) The gigantic yellow bee worried Maxine.
  (2) Every kid from syntax class came to the party
  (3) Maxine likes every yellow bee and purple ant.

Other Syntax Examples

One way to explore syntax is to know your clauses. There are <u>independent and dependent clauses</u>. An independent clause is one that can stand alone and form a <u>complete sentence</u>. A dependent clause, however, cannot stand on its own.

For example, "Hurrying to the door, she picked up her purse and ran." In this sentence, "hurrying to the door" is the dependent clause and "she picked up her purse and ran" is the independent clause. Let's take a look at these clauses becoming full sentences with the right syntax.

A. Simple Sentences

Remember our basic construct of subject + verb + direct object? These are called <u>simple sentences</u>. It's a nice way to start when you're just learning the English language. There's the subject (person or thing being discussed), verb (action-giver), and direct object (receiving the action of the verb). Here are some examples:

- I enjoy college.
- Work pays the bills.
- Hurricanes are scary.
- The sky is pink.
- The dog loves her owner.

The syntax in these lines is fine. They're grammatically correct. But, what if we could dazzle up our syntax a little? Let's take a look at a more detailed construct.

B. Complex Sentences

One of the best ways to improve our syntax is to move beyond the simple sentence. This brings us to complex sentences. These are sentences that contain a subordinate clause. A subordinate clause is an additional bit of information. This means complex sentences come together by combining a dependent clause (incomplete sentence/subordinate clause) and an independent clause (complete thought).

Let's expand the simple sentences above to create a new kind of syntax:

- Even though it's ridiculously expensive, I enjoy college.
- Work pays the bills, whether you like it or not.
- In the south of Florida, hurricanes are scary.
- The sky is pink, especially in the romantic city of Paris.
- Ever since she rescued her, the dog loves her owner.

C. How to Improve Syntax in Your Writing

Of course, the syntax of a sentence is more than the addition of a clause or two. How could it be that easy when the English language has so many rules (and exceptions)? On that note, it's important to note the difference between syntax and grammar.

Grammar is the rulebook. Grammar tells us to punctuate a sentence, capitalize proper nouns, and so forth. Syntax, however, is the application of the rules. It's how we combine all those rules to compose clear constructs. Here are three ways to improve the syntax in your writing.

1. Use the Active Voice

One of the best ways to keep your syntax clear is to write in the active voice. This means the subject is carrying out the action of the sentence. The active voice avoids muddled language. For example:

Hiking up the Andes, he drinks a bottle of water.

This line is written in the present tense using the active voice. That's good. What you want to avoid is something like this:

Hiking up the Andes, a bottle of water is drunk by him.

In addition to the unnecessary awkwardness of the passive voice, this sentence also implies that the bottle of water was one doing the hiking. Applying the rules of voice to your syntax allows you to write in a clear and present tense, free from an excess of helping verbs.

2. Match Your Numbers

This refers to your use of singular and plural words. If your subject is plural, then the rest of your sentence should be too. The same goes for singular instances. Let's take a look:

The club members love riding their bikes together.

Here, we have a plural subject that matches its verb. You wouldn't write:

The club members loves riding their bikes together.

You also wouldn't write:

The club member love riding his bike.

In these examples, you can see how syntax is the application of the rules. The rules tell us the difference between singular and plural words. Syntax allows us to apply them with clarity and precision.

3. Avoid Repetition

In an effort to be clear, we sometimes tiptoe around redundancy. For example, you wouldn't want to write:

Due to his overwhelming fear, he frightfully tethered the ship to the post.

When trying to paint a picture for a reader, it can be tempting to overemphasize. But, proper syntax allows us to paint a vivid scene with our clauses, numbers, and active voice. The line above can be transformed into something like:

Overwhelming fear complicated the simple task of tethering his boat to the dock.

Of course, this sentence can be re-written in many different ways. Therein lies the beauty of syntax. It allows us to apply the rules, find our own voice, and engage readers in our own unique way.

Simple Syntax

The truth of the matter is, the more we get directly to the point, the more our syntax will improve. Additional clauses and phrases are great. They bolster our writing with refreshing details. Just remember to provide a good mix of simple and complex sentences. This will create an even flow in your writing.