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CHAPTER 2



What is the Queen's English and why should one use it?



The Queen's English

The **Queen's English** means straightforward standard British English. It is the most authoritative and easily understood form of the language throughout the world, used in non-fiction, fiction and poetry. Textbooks use it, as do newspapers, businesses, government documents, air-traffic controllers, and ordinary people in private and work correspondence. It can be used well or badly. This book deals mainly with **written English** but also gives guidance on **spoken English**.

The Queen's English can be spoken in a variety of **accents**.

It does not have to be spoken in what has been called 'received pronunciation', 'Oxford English' or 'BBC English'.

It is useful, practical English, not exclusive or elitist. A spoken version called 'the Queen's English' is widely preferred for its clarity to any other form.

CHAPTER 5



A quick look at essential English language terms



We need to look at some essential words in order to understand how faults in English arise, and how to spot and rectify them. Most of the words are dealt with in more detail later. Even if you hated grammar at school, or never did it, or have forgotten it, you should find this chapter painless and helpful.

Consider this sentence:

Jack offered her a shiny gold ring, and she accepted it immediately.

This is a **sentence**, making sense on its own, starting with a capital letter and ending in a full stop. It is a **compound sentence**, made up of two **simple sentences** joined by the **conjunction** *and*:

Jack offered her a shiny gold ring. [and] She accepted it immediately.

Each sentence is grammatically complete, with a **subject** (*Jack*, *She*) and a **finite verb** (*offered*, *accepted*) in the past tense. A verb is in its finite (limited) sense when it is limited by having a specific tense and person (such as first person *I offered*, or third person, *he offered*). A verb in the infinitive, such as *to offer*, is not limited by tense or person. A **participle**, such as *offering*, is not a finite verb: it has no person. Suppose we just had:

Offering her a shiny gold ring.

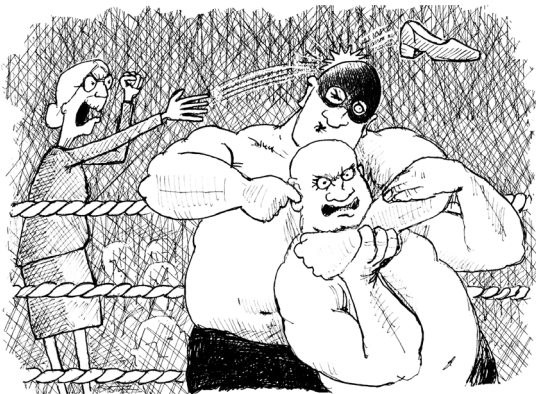
That is not a complete sentence as it has no subject and no finite verb, just a present participle, *offering*. **Incomplete sentences** are very common, and wrong.

In *Jack offered her a shiny gold ring*, there are two **nouns**, or naming words. One names *Jack* and one names a *ring*. *Jack* is a **proper noun**, naming a unique person, and is always spelled with an initial capital letter. In contrast, *ring* is a **common noun** and does not have an initial capital letter unless it starts a sentence.

In *She accepted it immediately*, the subject *She* is a **pronoun**, standing in for a noun. From this fragment, we cannot tell what her name is.

Verbs are words indicating action, such as *offered*, or they indicate states of being (with the verb *to be*), or having, feeling, seeming, etc. They can be finite, with a subject, number (singular or plural), tense, voice and mood, or can be in the infinitive. Their **voice** can be **active** (*he hit her*) or **passive** (*she was hit*). They can be **transitive**, taking a **direct object** which receives the action, so *hit* here is a transitive verb, subject *he*, direct object *her*. Verbs can be intransitive, with no object receiving the action, as in *He meditated*. There may be an **indirect object**. In *She threw her shoe at him*, what she threw was her shoe, the direct object, and what she threw it at is the indirect object, *him*.

The **mood** of a verb can be **indicative**, as in a statement, **imperative**, as in a command, or **subjunctive**, expressing doubt or supposition.



She threw her shoe at him.

Some verbs are called **auxiliary verbs**, meaning ‘helping verbs’. Although they can function as main verbs, when they function as auxiliaries they combine with other verbs to form tenses, moods and voices. They include *to be*, *to have*, *to do*, *can* (part of the verb *to be able* and lacking its own infinitive), *will* (also lacking an infinitive in the auxiliary sense). For example, combined with parts of the verb *to go*, we get combinations such as *will go* (future), *did go* (past), *have gone* (past).

Nouns may be modified by descriptive **adjectives**. In the first sentence on page 42, the noun *ring* is modified by two adjectives, *shiny* and *gold*. It was not just any old ring; it was a shiny gold one. *Gold* is sometimes a noun but here is an adjective: this illustrates that the same word can be more than one **part of speech**. The **main parts of speech** are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections.

Adverbs qualify verbs (and adjectives and adverbs), telling us more about what happened. In *She accepted it immediately*, the **adverb** *immediately* tells us when she accepted the ring.