

Study Guide for *Principles of Grammar*

by Dr. Leonard Peikoff

Lecture One

- Provide your own basic definition of grammar.
- What are the two branches of grammar and what do they relate to conceptually?
- What are the two incorrect theories about the source of grammatical rules?
- Indicate one unique thing about English grammar that creates a set of grammatical standards.
- Why does a valid rule of grammar not necessarily apply universally to all languages?
- In terms of grammar, what is a complete thought?
- Why is the conceptual or intellectual unity of a sentence so important?
- What are the bare minimum necessities to make a complete thought? What are the grammatical names for these?
- What is the grammatical definition of a phrase?
- What are some examples of phrases?
- What is the grammatical definition of a clause?
- Review the parts of speech related to the subject including nouns and noun equivalents.
- Review how verbs work as predicates and how verbals work.
- How do we differentiate the simple subject and simple predicate from other parts of a sentence?
- What are the four things an adverb can modify?

Lecture Two

- What cognitive need does a sentence fragment typically violate?
- When can a sentence fragment actually serve a cognitive purpose?
- How can appositives advance a thinking process?
- Why would a string of simple sentences inhibit clear thought?
- What cognitive need would too many units in a row violate?
- What added intellectual value is derived from the proper use of subordination?
- How can different conjunctions alter sense and meaning?
- What cognitive need do compound sentences serve?
- What logical or hierarchical function do compound sentences serve?

- How can overuse of subordination frustrate clarity?
- Differentiate between 'like' and 'as'.

Lecture Three

- Why are typographical techniques inappropriate for emphasis?
- How can word order alterations change emphasis and meaning?
- What is a periodic sentence and a loose sentence? Give original examples of each.
- How does a climaxing word order achieve emphasis?
- Describe good and bad uses of repetition as a tool of emphasis.
- When is the use of the same word for repetition necessary? When is it wrong?
- When should exact parallelism be used?
- How do departments from parallelism alter meaning and emphasis?
- What cognitive emphasis is achieved by correlatives?
- Describe a few techniques to achieve economy in writing?
- When does excess economy blur into incomplete thinking?

Lecture Four

- What are the basic verb tenses in English?
- Describe the difference in perfect and progressive tenses. When should each be used?
- How should you deal with the sequence of tenses?
- What are the two most common moods in English?
- What elements of meaning are associated with each mood?
- What types of statements are best put in the subjunctive mood?
- What cognitive issues arise in the choice of voice?
- What is the most important element in using participles?
- How should gerunds be used?

Lecture Five

- What is the role of infinitive verbs? Why are they called such?
- Give examples of different tenses in the use of the infinitive in an original sentence.
- What is the objective approach to dealing with the question of split infinitives?

- What is a dangling verbal? Provide an original example.
- How do dangling verbals betray clarity?
- Describe and explain the use of the four types of pronouns.
- Why is the case so important, cognitively, in using pronouns?
- What are the two common mistakes when using pronouns?
- What is an objective approach to differentiating between “that,” “who,” and “which?”

Lecture Six

- How and why did punctuation evolve in Western writing?
- What cognitive errors arise from improper use of punctuation?
- What dual epistemological roles does punctuation serve?
- Why is both excessive and deficient punctuation a problem?
- What kinds of parenthetical elements can be included via proper punctuation?
- What is the difference between restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers?
- What additional ways can commas be used to improve sense and meaning?

Lecture Seven

- What can one learn about a person from his diction?
- Why is diction so important in English?
- Describe the three levels of formality and provide a sentence in each level for the same thought.
- What principles should guide the choice of synonyms?
- What role does the issue of abstraction play in word choice?
- When is it and when is it not appropriate to use metaphor?
- What are some common and unavoidable English idioms?

Lecture Eight

- What factors account for linguistic change?
- How should one approach changes in language and grammar?
- What are the mistaken views of linguistic change?
- If possible, provide examples of recent changes in language that you find appropriate and some that you find inappropriate. Explain why.