

Homework 4 – Syntactic constituency

Due Friday, March 9

1. Constituency tests

1.1. Use the **pronoun test** to determine whether the underlined groups of words in the following sentences are **noun phrases**.

a. Sheila met the goat who ate her sock.

Resulting sentence: _____

Noun phrase? _____

Why/why not?

b. The shoe we tried on yesterday was much too big.

Resulting sentence: _____

Noun phrase? _____

Why/why not?

1.2. Use the **do-form test** to determine whether the underlined groups of words in the following sentences are **verb phrases**.

a. Chris runs in marathons every weekend.

Resulting sentence: _____

Verb phrase? _____

Why/why not?

- b. Michael e-mailed me a picture of baby porcupines.

Resulting sentence: _____

Verb phrase? _____

Why/why not?

2. Phrase breaks in songs

In songs and poetry, sentences are often too long to fit in a single line, and so the poet/songwriter needs to put line breaks in the middle of sentences. Your task is to figure out the phrase structure of the lyrics given, and tell me where these artists are putting line breaks with respect to phrases.

Some of the lyrics have some ~~crossed-out~~ words at their edges – ignore these.

In each of the three lyrics below, do the following three things:

1. Label each word with its part of speech. (some are done for you)

IMPORTANT: Ignore all of the crossed out words.
“//” represents the line break.

2. Find every phrase – that is, every NP, every VP, and every PP – in the lyrics given. Show me all of these phrases any way that works for you – brackets, a tree drawing, a list, whatever – but make sure that you find every single phrase.
3. Explain where the line break (“//”, remember) is with respect to phrases. Is it exactly between a pair of phrases? Is it inside one or more phrases? Say something about each phrase that either contains or is right next to the line break.

EXAMPLE The speed of sound, Coldplay

NPs: “*the inventors*”, “*the buildings that you put up*”, “*you*”

VPs: “*design the buildings that you put up*”, “*put up*”

PPs: “*up*”

<i>Det</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Aux</i>	<i>Neg</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>Det</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Conj</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>P</i>
the	inventors	could	never	design	//	the	buildings	that	you	put up

Where is the line break? *Inside the VP “design the buildings that you put up”, between the verb “design” and the NP “the buildings...”.*

(For extra credit, feel free to find another lyric where a line break occurs in the middle of the sentence and do the same things: label all words with parts of speech, find all phrases, and observe where the line break occurs with respect to the phrase edges.)

Building a mystery, Sarah McLachlan

You live in a church // ^{Conj} where you sleep with voodoo dolls.

Where is the line break?

Walk this way, Aerosmith

I took a big chance at the high-school dance // with a missy ~~who was~~
ready to play.

Where is the line break?

Love and some verses, Iron and Wine

Love is a dress ^{Conj} that you made // ^{Inf} long to hide your knees.

Where is the line break?