Introduction

The set of rules that tell you whether a sentence is correctly structured is called a grammar. Here is a simple, and very incomplete, grammar for English:

sentence : nounPhrase verbPhrase PERIOD
nounPhrase : ARTICLE Adjective NOUN
verbPhrase : VERB nounPhrase

Given these nouns,

cow
water
dog

these articles,

the
a

these verbs,

drank
chased

and these adjectives,

large
cool
yappy

we can generate a number of syntactically correct sentences, such as:

The large cow drank the cool water.
A yappy dog chased the large cow.
The cool water chased the cool dog.
The yappy water drank a large cow.

Grammars can also be used to recognize syntactically correct sentences. For example, the sentence:

A large dog drank the cool water.

can be fit to the grammar above in the following way:

Note that the grammar above does not allow for the sentence:

The large yappy dog drank the water.

since the grammar requires a single adjective in a noun phrase. We can modify the grammar to allow sentences of this form (and still allow for the sentences that were allowed before modification):
We can also allow for sentences like:

The dog drank water.

with a further modification:

The newest modification is shown in blue.

**Semantics**

Syntax tells you if the sentence is constructed correctly. Semantics tells you whether a correctly structured sentence makes any sense. The sentence:

The box drank water

is correct syntactically speaking (subject then verb then object) but seems wrong since boxes don’t drink. Semantics is handled in the *evaluation* stage.