

Categorizing words as parts of speech is based on two principles. First, a word does not become a part of speech until it is written or spoken in a sentence. Once a word is used in a sentence, this first principle is important because a word can function as more than one part of speech, depending where it is located and how it is used in the sentence. For example, the word reading can be used as different parts of speech.

- # *Reading* is an enjoyable pastime. (noun)
- # She has been reading since she was three. (verb)
- # The reading assignment took me two hours. (adjective)

The second principle identifies words as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections--the traditional classes--on the basis of similar characteristics. The word characteristics is important because it is not just one but several of these characteristics that identify a word as a specific part of speech.

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## Nouns

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Once a word is used in a sentence, it becomes a part of speech. As with other parts of speech, words are classified as nouns if they share similar characteristics. Words are classified as nouns based on four similar characteristics. The first characteristic of many nouns is that they may be words that name a person, animal, place, substance, thing, quality or idea. Most naming words can, be classified as nouns.

- # *My brother* will graduate from college next month.
- # *Our car* I was stolen in Los Angeles.
- # *Honesty* is important in a relationship.

Another characteristic of nouns is that they can have a plural form. A word with an -s or -es plural ending may be a noun. Boys, cats, roses, cities, gases, boxes, and months are examples of plural nouns. However, some nouns become plurals by changing their spelling. For example, man becomes men, child becomes children, and mouse becomes mice. Then there are some nouns, such as sheep or deer, that do not change for both their singular and plural form. All of the italicized words name a person, animal, plant, place, substance, thing, quality or idea and can have a plural form.

The next characteristic of nouns is that they are often easily identified because determiners or noun indicators signal them in a sentence. The words a, an, and the are determiners or noun indicators often placed before a noun in a sentence. But, determiners or noun indicators do not always come just before a nouns; they may be separated from a nouns by other words.

- # *The best friend* is the one who is an honest, loyal person.
- # *The boys* had eaten all the food in the kitchen.
- # *A new car* is used in an old fifties setting to suggest the manufacturer's old-fashioned quality.

All the italicized words are nouns that name a person, animal, place, substance, thing, quality, or idea, can have a plural form, and are indicated by an italicized determiner or noun indicator.

The final similar characteristic is that many nouns have the same word endings or suffixes.

Noun suffixes meaning:

"one who"

-or actor  
-er baker  
-ard laggard  
-ster gangster  
-yer lawyer  
-an artisan  
-ant contestant  
-ent dependent  
-ary dictionary  
-ate graduate  
-eer engineer  
-ier cashier  
-ist psychologist

"that which"

-ice police  
-ment movement  
-mony testimony  
-ure closure

"one who is"

-ee devotee  
-ite contrite  
-ive fugitive

Noun suffixes meaning:

"state, condition, quality, act"

-hood motherhood  
-dom freedom  
-ness weakness  
-ship friendship  
-tude attitude  
-age bondage  
-ance allowance  
-ancy abundancy  
-cy diplomacy  
-ence influence  
-ency impotency  
-ion invasion  
-ism criticism  
-ity variety  
-ment establishment  
-mony matrimony  
-y beauty  
-ure venture

Noun suffixes meaning:

"action or process"

-ation creation  
-tion investigation

Noun suffixes meaning:

"little"

-en mitten  
-ie lassie  
-kin  
-let booklet  
-ling duckling  
-ock hollyhock

Noun suffixes meaning:

"place for"

-ary library  
-ery eatery  
-ory laboratory

## Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun.

The pronoun, like the noun, is used in the common sentence patterns as subject, object of a verb, indirect object, object of a verbal, object of a preposition, subjective complement, and so forth.

Pronouns may be classified as personal, intensive, reflexive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, indefinite, and reciprocal.

| Person         | Nominative Case | Possessive Case | Objective Case |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Singular Forms |                 |                 |                |
| First          | I               | my, mine        | me             |
| Second         | you             | your, yours     | you            |
| Third          | he, she, it     | her, hers, its  | him, her, it   |

Plural Forms

|        |       |               |      |
|--------|-------|---------------|------|
| First  | we    | our, ours     | us   |
| Second | you   | your, yours   | you  |
| Third  | then, | their, theirs | them |

Note: My, your, our, and their are always used as adjectives.

## Kinds of Pronouns

1. Personal pronouns show person; that is, they, indicate whether the pronoun stands for the person speaking, the first person; the person spoken to, the second person; or the person spoken of, the third person. Personal pronouns also have number and case.
2. Intensive and reflexive pronouns have the same forms. They are formed by adding -self or -selves (plural form) to certain personal pronouns.

SINGULAR:    myself    yourself    himself    herself    itself

PLURAL:        ourselves        themselves        ourselves

- The intensive pronoun usually comes after the word it stands for and emphasizes that word.

! The president himself met the reporters.

! I myself gave him the directions.

! I wrote to the principal himself.

○ The reflexive pronoun points the action back toward the subject. It may function as a subjective complement, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition, object of a gerund, and so forth.

OBJECT OF PREPOSITION:    She bought the dress for herself.

INDIRECT OBJECT:        She bought herself a new dress.

SUBJECTIVE COMPLEMENT:    The coach was not himself.

DIRECT OBJECT:            Do you consider yourself his friend?

3. Demonstrative pronouns are used only in the third person, to point out particular persons, places, or things.

SINGULAR: this, that

PLURAL:        these, those

This is my party.

That is Jim's shirt.

These are her pencils.

Those are good apples.

- When these pronouns modify nouns, they are demonstrative adjectives.

This party is fun.

That shirt is torn.

These shoes are too expensive.

Those papers are soiled.

4. Relative pronouns relate subordinate clauses to main clauses. The relative pronouns are who, which, and that.

I am the person who called earlier today.  
 The door that I closed last night is now open.  
 The boy whose knife I found lived across the street.  
 Here is the painter whom we met last sununer.

- Notice that who, whose, and whom are used to refer to people, and that is used to refer to things.

5. Interrogative pronouns introduce question sentences. The interrogative pronouns are who, whose, whom, which, and what.

Who is in the cellar?  
 What is the date of his birth?

6. Indefinite pronouns refer to particular persons, places, or things in a vague and general manner.

Somebody took the key to the storeroom.  
 Each of the teachers receives a complimentary copy.  
 Nobody has his or her ticket.

Most indefinite pronouns function as singulars:

|         |           |          |          |           |
|---------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| another | anybody   | anyone   | anything | each      |
| either  | everybody | everyone | neither  | nobody    |
| no one  | one       | somebody | someone  | something |

Some indefinite pronouns have a plural meaning only:

|      |     |      |         |
|------|-----|------|---------|
| both | few | many | several |
|------|-----|------|---------|

Other indefinite pronouns do not clearly express either a singular or plural meaning:

|     |     |      |      |
|-----|-----|------|------|
| all | any | none | some |
|-----|-----|------|------|

7. Reciprocal pronouns express a mutual relationship. There are two reciprocal pronouns: each other and one another.

My brother and I help each other with our homework.  
 To keep their spirits up, the trapped miners shouted frequently to one another.

## Adjectives

Adjectives are words that modify nouns and pronouns. They describe or tell something about the nouns they modify. Most adjectives answer the questions: What kind? Which one? and How many?

happy girl    his desk    that boy    five books    many people    first class

1. Adjectives answering the question What kind? are descriptive. They tell the quality, kind or condition of the nouns they modify.

red boat    tired children    heavy load    waving flag    blue water

2. Adjectives answering the question Which one? narrow or restrict the meaning of the modifier.

- Possessive adjectives are possessive pronouns or possessive nouns used to restrict the ownership of a noun.

my boat    our children    his load    someone's flag    Maria's car

- Demonstrative adjectives point out a noun or pronoun that is within reach or sight.

this dress    these toys    that suitcase    those papers

- Interrogative adjectives introduce direct or indirect questions. The direct question asks for answer and ends in a question mark. The indirect question is a sentence constructed so that it indirectly tells the question someone else asked, but the indirect question ends in a period.

INDIRECT: He asked which tools he should take.

INDIRECT: He wondered what tools he should take.

INDIRECT: She asked whose tools were lying on the floor.

DIRECT: Which tools should he take ?

DIRECT: What tools are needed?

- Relative adjectives introduce clauses and modify the noun that follows.

The girl whose dress was torn is Jane Smith.

Take whatever supplies you can carry.

I will buy whichever car is available.

3. Adjectives answering the question How many? are words that indicate a number to modify or describe the noun or pronouns.

some people    each pet    three women    few answers    third grade

- Numerical adjectives use cardinal numbers to modify a noun or pronoun.

four waiters      six papers      one shoe      ten men

Some numerical adjectives use ordinal numbers to modify a noun or pronoun.

first class      twentieth century      second place      Twelfth Night

- Indefinite adjectives use indefinite pronouns to designate the indefinite number of a noun or pronoun.

some apples      each spoon      many people      few answers

4. Article adjectives are the words a, an and the. A and an are known as indefinite articles because they point out nonspecific nouns and pronouns. The is known as a definite article because it points out specific nouns and pronouns.

INDEFINITE:    A student must learn to study effectively. [any student]

DEFINITE:      The student learned to study effectively. [specific student]

## Verbs

Verbs are words that show action or express being in relation to the subject of a sentence. Main verbs show an action or express a state of being.

- Action verbs are usually the easiest to identify.

The first baseman threw the ball to the catcher. (action verb)

Unfortunately, the catcher dropped the ball. (action verb)

- The state of being verbs are all forms of the verb to be. The most common are is, are, was, were, and am.

The pitcher is on the mound. (being verb)

They are in the their seats at the game. (being verb)

- Verbs occur in set positions in sentences. The most common position for the verb is directly after the subject or after the subject and its modifiers.

At 9:30 am only five students (subject) were (verb) in the classroom.

The five students in the classroom (subject and modifiers) were (verb) in the wrong classroom.

- The form of a verb refers to its tense, meaning the time of the action or being. The time may be in the present or past.

Roseanne sings "The Star-Spangled Banner." (present)

Roseanne sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." (past)



- Those that answer the How much? question express degree.

She is entirely correct. (adverb)

He was somewhat happy. (adverb)

- Most words ending in -ly are Adverbs .

He completed the task skillfully. (adverb)

She answered him courteously. (adverb)

However, there are a few exceptions.

The house provided a lovely view of the valley. (adjective)

Your goblin mask is ugly. (adjective)

## Prepositions

A preposition is a word or words that function as a connective. The preposition connects its object(s) to some other word(s) in the sentence.

- A preposition and its object(s)--usually a noun or pronoun--with its modifiers make up a prepositional phrase.

Juan played against Aiden and won the game.

prep. obj.

prepositional phrase

All of his friends cheered for him.

prep. obj.

prepositional phrase

- Some of the most common prepositions are the following:

|         |         |         |        |         |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| about   | above   | across  | after  | against |
| among   | around  | before  | behind | below   |
| beneath | beside  | between | beyond | but     |
| by      | despite | down    | for    | from    |
| in      | into    | like    | near   | of      |
| off     | on      | over    | past   | to      |
| toward  | under   | until   | upon   | with    |

- Some prepositions are composed of more than one word and are made up from other parts of speech:

|              |            |             |               |
|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| according to | ahead of   | along with  | as far as     |
| as well as   | aside from | back of     | because of    |
| in spite of  | instead of | in front of | together with |

- Caution: Do not confuse adverbs with prepositions.

I went across slowly. (without an object-adverb)

I went across the field. (with an object-preposition)

We walked behind silently. (without an object-adverb)

We walked behind the mall. (with an object-preposition)

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## Conjunctions

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A conjunction is a word that connects and shows a relationship between words, phrases, or clauses.

- A phrase is two or more words acting as a part of speech.

in the house (prepositional phrase)

- A clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb. An independent clause can stand by itself as a complete sentence. A dependent clause cannot stand by itself as a complete sentence.

Anita wants a new car. (independent clause)

subj. verb

Because Anita wants a new car (independent clause)

subj. verb

- There are three kinds of conjunctions: coordinating, subordinating, and adverbial.
  - " Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses of equal rank: noun with noun, adjective with adjective, verb with verb, phrase with phrase, main clause with main clause, and subordinate clause with subordinate clause.

Two nouns: Bring a pencil and some paper.

noun conj. noun

Two phrases: Did she go to the store or to the game?

phrase conj. phrase

Two independent clauses: John hit the ball, and he ran to first base.

ind. clause conj. ind. clause

- " The seven common coordinating conjunctions are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. One simple way to remember them is to think of the acronym FANBOYS.

F or  
A nd  
N or  
B ut  
O r  
Y et  
S o

- " Paired conjunctions such as either/or, neither/nor, and both/and are usually classified as coordinating conjunctions.

Either one of the students or the teacher had left a book on the table.

- " Subordinating conjunctions connect dependent clauses with main clauses.

Because today is her birthday, Anita wants a new car.  
(dependent clause) (independent clause)

- " The most common subordinating conjunctions are:

|         |          |          |          |               |            |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|------------|
| after   | although | as       | as if    | as long as    | as soon as |
| because | before   | but that | if       | in order that | provided   |
| since   | so that  | till     | until    | when          | whenever   |
| where   | whereas  | whether  | wherever |               |            |

- " Caution: Certain words can function as either conjunctions or prepositions. It is necessary to look ahead to see if the word introduces a clause with a subject and verb (conjunction) or takes an object (preposition). Some of the words with two functions are these: after, for, since, until.

After the concert was over, we went home. (conjunction if a dependant clause)

After the concert, we went home. (preposition if a phrase)

- " **Adverbial conjunctions** are used to connect two independent clauses.

Today is Anita's birthday; **therefore**, she wants a new car.  
(independent clause) (independent clause)

- " Adverbial conjunctions include the following words and phrases: **also, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, in fact, moreover, nevertheless, now, on the other hand, otherwise, soon, therefore, similarly, then, thus.**

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## Interjections

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An interjection is one or more words used to convey strong emotions or surprise. When an interjection is used alone, it is usually punctuated with an exclamation mark.

Wow!    Curses!    Yeah!    Holy cops and robbers, Batman!

When it is used as part of a sentence, an interjection is usually followed by a comma.

Oh, I left my car keys in the ignition and closed the door!

The interjection presents no significant structural problem and is seldom used in college writing.