

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE PARTS OF SPEECH

NOUNS

words that name a **person** (*boy, the doctor*); **place** (*suburb, ocean*); **thing** (*computer, tree*); or **idea** (*kindness, freedom*). If the noun has a specific name--*Chicago, Dr. Watson*--it is called a **proper noun** and begins with a capital letter.

Nouns are the subjects and objects in sentences. They are often identified by a **noun marker** *a, an, the*. Nouns can be singular or plural.

However, note that

- 1) some nouns can be used as **adjectives** (words that modify nouns) as in **police** station, and
- 2) some nouns can be used as **verbs** (action or state of being words) as in the sentence *Authorities **police** the students during registration.*

Always examine the function of a word in a sentence before deciding its parts of speech.

PRONOUNS

words that take the place of common or proper nouns such as *he, hers, us, they, I*. The noun the pronoun stands for is called the **antecedent**. Many pronouns change form according to their function in the sentence (see the section on **pronoun case**).

Like the nouns they stand for, pronouns are singular or plural.

Additional properties of pronouns.

Pronouns can be non-specific or **indefinite** such as *anyone, nothing*.

Pronouns can ask questions such as *who, what, which*.

Pronouns can introduce subordinate clauses (clauses that cannot stand alone as sentences) as in the example

*The man **who just came in** is my father.*

Like nouns, pronouns can act as adjectives as in ***His** coat is on the chair.*

There are about one hundred pronouns. Consult a handbook for further study.

VERBS

words that express **action** (*hits, eat*), or **being** (*are, becomes*). Verbs carry **tense**; that is, they can express the past *I sang*, the present *I sing*, or the future *I will sing*.

Some verbs are used in conjunction with the main verbs to help express the tense; these verbs are called **auxiliary** or **helping verbs** *I **have been** singing, we **might** sing together.*

VERBALS are verb forms that are not functioning as verbs in a sentence.

Note the examples:

***Swimming** is all he lives for.*

(**swimming** is used as the subject of the sentence and is a noun in this case.)

*You can dry your **swimming** gear on this line.*

(**swimming** modifies the word **gear** and is an adjective in this sentence.)

ADJECTIVES

words that modify (describe) nouns or pronouns: *the unpaved road, seven beautiful butterflies*. The articles *a, an, the* are classified as adjectives.

Although adjectives often come before a noun as in *the fierce black dog*, they can come after a verb (called a **linking verb**) as in *The soup tasted salty*.

ADVERBS

words that modify a verb--*Sam walked quickly*; a verbal--*Walking quickly, Sam crossed the street*; an adjective--*a very pretty dress*; or another adverb--*the music was extremely well played*.

PREPOSITIONS

words that show a relationship between the noun or pronoun that follows it and another word in the sentence.

Some common prepositions include **around, between, on, till, underneath, with, in, over**. *The girl with the long, braided hair. You are the brightest student in the class.*

The phrase in which the preposition occurs usually functions as an adjective or an adverb.

NOTE: Subjects are never found in prepositional phrases.

See your handbook for a comprehensive list of prepositions.

CONJUNCTIONS

words that join words, phrases, or clauses and show a relationship between these elements.

The main conjunctions are:

Coordinating conjunctions--*and, for, or, nor, yet, so, but*

Subordinating conjunctions--*after, although, before, unless, until, and others*.

Conjunctive adverbs--*besides, consequently, however, moreover, nevertheless* and others.

These words are also called transitions.

A fuller discussion of conjunctions is given in the section on sentence structure.

INTERJECTIONS

words that express surprise or emotion such as **Help! Wow! Right on!**