VERBAL ABILITY

SESSION – 1

ꙮ PARTS OF SPEECH

There are eight parts of speech in the English language: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. The part of speech indicates how the word functions in meaning as well as grammatically within the sentence. An individual word can function as more than one part of speech when used in different circumstances.

NOUN

A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea.

- *man... College... house... happiness*

Proper nouns always start with a capital letter; common nouns do not. Nouns can be singular or plural, concrete or abstract. Nouns show possession by adding *'s.*

Nouns can function in different roles within a sentence; for example, a noun can be a subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, or object of a preposition.

- *The young **girl** brought me a very long **letter** from the **teacher**, and then she quickly disappeared.*

Some more Examples

The **highlighted** words in the following sentences are all nouns:

- Late last **year** our **neighbours** bought a **goat**.
- **Portia White** was an **opera singer**.
- The **bus inspector** looked at all the **passengers' passes**.
- According to **Plutarch**, the **library** at **Alexandria** was destroyed in 48 B.C.
- **Philosophy** is of little **comfort** to the **starving**.

Noun Plurals

Most nouns change their form to indicate number by adding "-s" or "-es", as illustrated in the following sentences:

- When Matthew was small he rarely told the **truth** if he thought he was going to be punished.
- Many people do not believe that **truths** are self-evident.
- As they walked through the silent house, they were startled by an unexpected **echo**.
- I like to shout into the quarry and listen to the **echoes** that return.
- He tripped over a **box** left carelessly in the hallway.
- Since we are moving, we will need many **boxes**.

There are other nouns which form the plural by changing the last letter before adding "s". Some words ending in "f" form the plural by deleting "f" and adding "ves," and words ending in "y" form the plural by deleting the "y" and adding "ies," as in the following pairs of sentences:

- The harbour at Marble Mountain has one **wharf**.
- There are several **wharves** in Halifax Harbour.
- Warsaw is their favourite **city** because it reminds them of their courtship.
- The vacation my grandparents won includes trips to twelve European **cities**.
- The children circled around the headmaster and shouted, "Are you a **mouse** or a man?"
- The audience was shocked when all five men admitted that they were afraid of **mice**.

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Other nouns form the plural irregularly. If English is your first language, you probably know most of these already: when in doubt, consult a good dictionary.

Possessive Nouns

In the possessive case, a noun or pronoun changes its form to show that it owns or is closely related to something else. Usually, nouns become possessive by adding a combination of an apostrophe and the letter "s."

You can form the possessive case of a singular noun that does not end in "s" by adding an apostrophe and "s," as in the following sentences:

- The red suitcase is **Cassandra's**.
- The only luggage that was lost was the **prime minister's**.
- The exhausted recruits were woken before dawn by the **drill sergeant's** screams.
- The **miner's** face was covered in coal dust.

You can form the possessive case of a singular noun that ends in "s" by adding an apostrophe alone or by adding an apostrophe and "s," as in the following examples:

- The **bus's** seats are very uncomfortable.
- The **bus'** seats are very uncomfortable.
- The film crew accidentally crushed the **platypus's** eggs.
- The film crew accidentally crushed the **platypus'** eggs.
- **Felicia Hemans's** poetry was once more popular than Lord Byron's.
- **Felicia Hemans'** poetry was once more popular than Lord Byron's.

You can form the possessive case of a plural noun that does not end in "s" by adding an apostrophe and a "s," as in the following examples:

- The **children's** mittens were scattered on the floor of the porch.
- The **sheep's** pen was mucked out every day.
- Since we have a complex appeal process, a **jury's** verdict is not always final.
- The **men's** hockey team will be playing as soon as the **women's** team is finished.
- The hunter followed the **moose's** trail all morning but lost it in the afternoon.
- You can form the possessive case of a plural noun that *does* end in "s" by adding an apostrophe:
- The concert was interrupted by the **dogs'** barking, the **ducks'** quacking, and the **babies'** squalling.
- The **janitors'** room is downstairs and to the left.
- My uncle spent many hours trying to locate the **squirrels'** nest.

Using Possessive Nouns

When you read the following sentences, you will notice that a noun in the possessive case frequently functions as an adjective modifying another noun:

- The **miner's** face was covered in coal dust.

Here the possessive noun "miner's" is used to modify the noun "face" and together with the article "the," they make up the noun phrase that is the sentence's subject.

- The concert was interrupted by the **dogs'** barking, the **ducks'** quacking, and the **babies'** squalling.

In this sentence, each possessive noun modifies a gerund. The possessive noun "dogs'" modifies "barking," "ducks'" modifies "quacking," and "babies'" modifies "squalling."
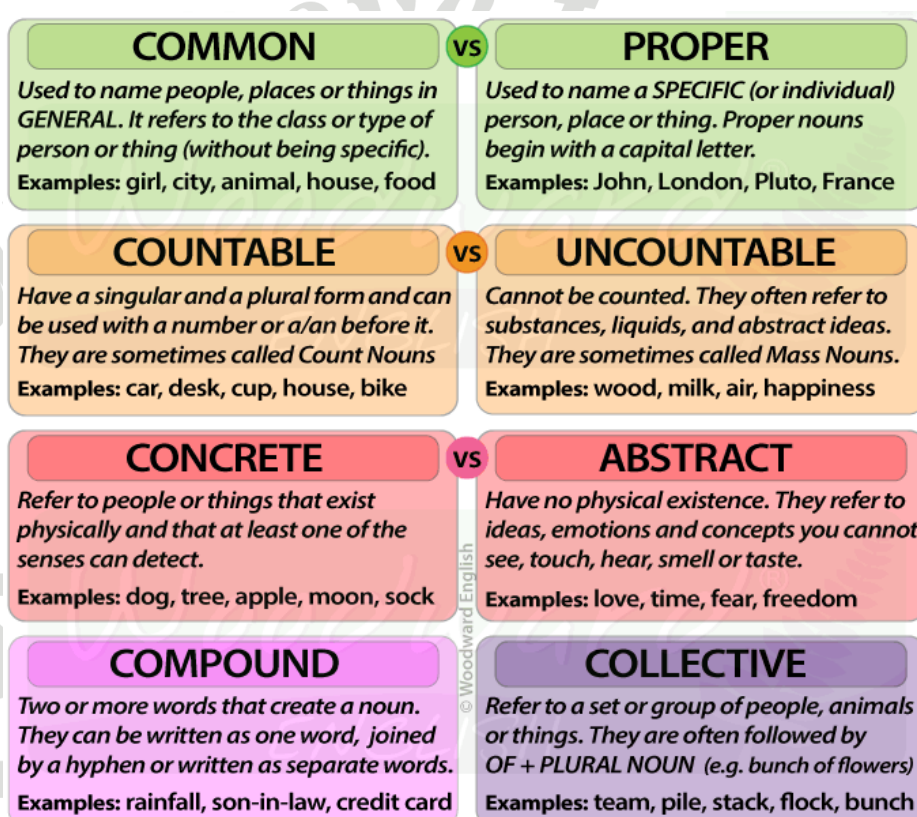
- The film crew accidentally crushed the **platypus's** eggs.

In this example the possessive noun "platypus's" modifies the noun "eggs" and the noun phrase "the platypus's eggs" is the direct object of the verb "crushed."

- My uncle spent many hours trying to locate the **squirrels'** nest.

In this sentence the possessive noun "squirrels'" is used to modify the noun "nest" and the noun phrase "the squirrels' nest" is the object of the infinitive phrase "to locate."

Types of Nouns

COMMON **vs**	PROPER
Used to name people, places or things in GENERAL. It refers to the class or type of person or thing (without being specific). Examples: girl, city, animal, house, food	Used to name a SPECIFIC (or individual) person, place or thing. Proper nouns begin with a capital letter. Examples: John, London, Pluto, France
COUNTABLE **vs**	UNCOUNTABLE
Have a singular and a plural form and can be used with a number or a/an before it. They are sometimes called Count Nouns Examples: car, desk, cup, house, bike	Cannot be counted. They often refer to substances, liquids, and abstract ideas. They are sometimes called Mass Nouns. Examples: wood, milk, air, happiness
CONCRETE **vs**	ABSTRACT
Refer to people or things that exist physically and that at least one of the senses can detect. Examples: dog, tree, apple, moon, sock	Have no physical existence. They refer to ideas, emotions and concepts you cannot see, touch, hear, smell or taste. Examples: love, time, fear, freedom
COMPOUND	COLLECTIVE
Two or more words that create a noun. They can be written as one word, joined by a hyphen or written as separate words. Examples: rainfall, son-in-law, credit card	Refer to a set or group of people, animals or things. They are often followed by OF + PLURAL NOUN (e.g. bunch of flowers) Examples: team, pile, stack, flock, bunch

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There are many different types of nouns. As you know, you capitalise some nouns, such as "Canada" or "Louise," and do not capitalise others, such as "badger" or "tree" (unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence). In fact, grammarians have developed a whole series of noun types, including the proper noun, the common noun, the concrete noun, the abstract noun, the countable noun (also called the count noun), the non-countable noun (also called the mass noun), and the collective noun. You should note that a noun will belong to more than one type: it will be proper or common, abstract or concrete, *and* countable or non-countable or collective.

Proper Nouns

You always write a **proper noun** with a capital letter, since the noun represents the name of a specific person, place, or thing. The names of days of the week, months, historical documents, institutions, organisations, religions, their holy texts and their adherents are proper nouns. A proper noun is the opposite of a common noun

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In each of the following sentences, the proper nouns are **highlighted**:

- The **Marroons** were transported from **Jamaica** and forced to build the fortifications in **Halifax**.
- Many people dread **Monday** mornings.
- **Beltane** is celebrated on the first of **May**.
- **Abraham** appears in the **Talmud** and in the **Koran**.
- Last year, I had a **Baptist**, a **Buddhist**, and a **Gardnerian Witch** as roommates.

Common Nouns

A **common noun** is a noun referring to a person, place, or thing in a general sense -- usually, you should write it with a capital letter only when it begins a sentence. A common noun is the opposite of a proper noun.

In each of the following sentences, the common nouns are **highlighted**:

- According to the **sign**, the nearest **town** is 60 **miles** away.
- All the **gardens** in the **neighbourhood** were invaded by **beetles** this **summer**.
- I don't understand why some **people** insist on having six different **kinds** of **mustard** in their **cupboards**.
- The road **crew** was startled by the **sight** of three large **moose** crossing the **road**.
- Many child-care **workers** are underpaid.

Sometimes you will make proper nouns out of common nouns, as in the following examples:

- The tenants in the **Garnet Apartments** are appealing the large and sudden increase in their rent.
- The meals in the Bouncing **Bean Restaurant** are less expensive than meals in ordinary restaurants.
- Many witches refer to the Renaissance as the Burning **Times**.
- The **Diary of Anne Frank** is often a child's first introduction to the history of the **Holocaust**.

Concrete Nouns

A **concrete noun** is a noun which names anything (or anyone) that you can perceive through your physical senses: touch, sight, taste, hearing, or smell. A concrete noun is the opposite of a abstract noun.

The **highlighted** words in the following sentences are all concrete nouns:

- The **judge** handed the **files** to the **clerk**.
- Whenever they take the **dog** to the **beach**, it spends hours chasing **waves**.
- The real estate **agent** urged the **couple** to buy the second **house** because it had new **shingles**.
- As the **car** drove past the **park**, the **thump** of a disco **tune** overwhelmed the string **quartet's rendition** of a **minuet**.
- The **book binder** replaced the flimsy paper **cover** with a sturdy, cloth-covered **board**.

Abstract Nouns

An **abstract noun** is a noun which names anything which you can *not* perceive through your five physical senses, and is the opposite of a concrete noun. The **highlighted** words in the following sentences are all abstract nouns:

- Buying the fire extinguisher was an **afterthought**.
- Tillie is amused by people who are nostalgic about **childhood**.
- **Justice** often seems to slip out of our grasp.
- Some scientists believe that **schizophrenia** is transmitted genetically.

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Countable Nouns

A **countable noun** (or **count noun**) is a noun with both a singular and a plural form, and it names anything (or anyone) that you can *count*. You can make a countable noun plural and attach it to a plural verb in a sentence. Countable nouns are the opposite of non-countable nouns and collective nouns.

In each of the following sentences, the **highlighted** words are countable nouns:

- We painted the **table** red and the **chairs** blue.
- Since he inherited his **aunt's library**, Jerome spends every **weekend** indexing his **books**.
- Miriam found six silver **dollars** in the **toe** of a **sock**.
- The oak **tree** lost three **branches** in the **hurricane**.
- Over the **course** of twenty-seven **years**, Martha Ballad delivered just over eight hundred **babies**.

Non-Countable Nouns

A **non-countable noun** (or **mass noun**) is a noun which does not have a plural form, and which refers to something that you could (or would) not usually count. A non-countable noun always takes a singular verb in a sentence. Non-countable nouns are similar to collective nouns, and are the opposite of countable nouns.

The **highlighted** words in the following sentences are non-countable nouns:

- Joseph Priestly discovered **oxygen**.
- The word "oxygen" cannot normally be made plural.
- **Oxygen** is essential to human life.
  - Since "oxygen" is a non-countable noun, it takes the singular verb "is" rather than the plural verb "are."
- We decided to sell the **furniture** rather than take it with us when we moved.
  - You cannot make the noun "furniture" plural.
- The **furniture** is heaped in the middle of the room.
  - Since "furniture" is a non-countable noun, it takes a singular verb, "is heaped."
- The crew spread the **gravel** over the roadbed.
  - You cannot make the non-countable noun "gravel" plural.
- **Gravel** is more expensive than I thought.
  - Since "gravel" is a non-countable noun, it takes the singular verb form "is."

Collective Nouns

A **collective noun** is a noun naming a group of things, animals, or persons. You could count the individual members of the group, but you usually think of the group as a whole is generally as one unit. You need to be able to recognise collective nouns in order to maintain subject-verb agreement. A collective noun is similar to a non-countable noun, and is roughly the opposite of a countable noun.

In each of the following sentences, the **highlighted** word is a collective noun:

- The **flock** of geese spends most of its time in the pasture.
- The collective noun "flock" takes the singular verb "spends."
- The **jury** is dining on take-out chicken tonight.
  - In this example the collective noun "jury" is the subject of the singular compound verb "is dining."
- The steering **committee** meets every Wednesday afternoon.
  - Here the collective noun "committee" takes a singular verb, "meets."

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