

Parts of Speech

What are “parts of speech”?

The **parts of speech** are the primary categories of words according to their function in a sentence. In the English language, there are mainly eight parts of speech: articles – nouns – pronouns – adjectives – verbs – adverbs – prepositions – conjunctions.

I- Nouns

Nouns are words that identify or name people, places, or things. Nouns can function as the subject of a clause or sentence, an object of a verb, or an object of a preposition. Words like *cat*, *book*, *table*, *girl*, and *plane* are all nouns.

I-1 Functions of Nouns

Subject

The subject in a sentence or clause is the person or thing doing, performing, or controlling the action of the verb. For example:

- “The **cat** chased its tail.” (The noun *dog* is performing the action of the verb *chase*.)
- “Zeineb reads a book every week.” (The proper noun *Zeineb* is performing the action of the verb *read*.)

Object

Grammatical objects have three grammatical roles: the **direct object** of a verb, the **indirect object** of a verb, or the **object of a preposition**.

Direct objects

Direct objects are what receive the action of the verb in a sentence or clause. For example:

- “The cat chased its **tail**.” (The noun *tail* is receiving the action of the verb *chase*.)
- “Zeineb reads a **book** every week.” (The noun *book* is receiving the action of the verb *read*.)

Indirect objects

An **indirect object** is the person or thing who receives the **direct object** of the verb. For instance:

- "Please pass **Sami** the *salt*." (The proper noun *Sami* is receiving the direct object *salt*, which receives the action of the verb *pass*.)
- "I sent the **company** an *application* for the job." (The noun *company* is receiving the direct object *application*, which receives the action of the verb *sent*.)

Objects of prepositions

Nouns are also used after prepositions to create prepositional phrases. When a noun is part of a prepositional phrase, it is known as the **object of the preposition**. For example:

- "Your backpack is under the **table**." (The noun *table* is the object of the preposition *under*, which creates the prepositional phrase *under the table*.)
- "I am looking for **work**." (The noun *work* is the object of the preposition *for*, which creates the prepositional phrase *for work*.)

Predicate Nouns

Nouns that follow linking verbs are known as **predicate nouns** (sometimes known as **predicative nouns**). These serve to rename or re-identify the subject. For example:

- "Honesty is **a virtue**." (The noun phrase *a virtue* follows the linking verb *is* to rename the subject *honesty*.)
- "Farid seems like **a real bully**." (The noun phrase *a real bully* follows the linking verb *seems* to rename the subject *Tommy*.)
- "Probably this is **a blessing in disguise**." (The noun phrase *a blessing in disguise* follows the linking verb *is* to rename the subject *this*.)

I-2 Categories of Nouns

There are many different kinds of nouns, and it's important to know the different way each type can be used in a sentence.

Common nouns Vs. Proper Nouns

Nouns that identify general people, places, or things are called **common nouns**—they name or identify that which is *common* among others. They refer to general, unspecific categories of entities. They name any person, place or thing. Examples: man, table, country, hotel, student, ...

Proper nouns, on the other hand, are used to identify an absolutely **unique** person, place, or thing, and they are signified by capital letters, no matter where they appear in a sentence.

They can refer to :

- Personal names (**Radia, Betty, Dr. Wilson, President Kennedy, Queen Elisabeth ...**)
- Festivals/holy days (**Christmas, Independence Day, Aid El Adha, Halloween, Thanksgiving, ...**)
- Time units (days, months) : **Monday, August,** (seasons are not capitalized).
- Geographical units (cities, countries, rivers, mountains, oceans, seas, monuments...) : **London, Spain, the Mississippi, the Alps, the Pacific, the Eiffel Tower...**
- Institutions/organizations (**Cambridge University, the BBC, the Red Cross, ...**)
- Nationalities (**Algerian, English, American, French, ..**)
- Religions/ creeds/ denominations (**Islam, Christianity, Sunni, Catholics, ...**)

Common Nouns	Proper Nouns
"He sat on the chair ."	"Go find Samir and tell him dinner is ready."
"I live in a city ."	"I live in Biskra ."
"We met some people ."	" Prince William is loved by many."

Concrete Nouns Vs. Abstract Nouns

Concrete nouns name people, places, animals, or things that are physically tangible—that is, they can be seen or touched, or have some physical properties. They name anything (or anyone) that can be perceived through our physical senses.

Proper nouns are also usually concrete, as they describe unique people, places, or things that are also tangible. Some examples of concrete nouns are:

- Table – rocks – lake – countries – people – Africa – MacBook – Jonathan – cat – street – computer – salt – wool – board – music – gold – smoke – air – water.....

Abstract nouns, as their name implies, name intangible things, such as concepts, ideas, feelings, characteristics, attributes, etc. For instance:

- Love – hate – decency – conversation – emotion – respect – democracy – philosophy – courage – fear – wisdom – luck – honesty – happiness – decency – politeness – running – reading...

Countable nouns Vs. Uncountable nouns

➤ **Countable nouns**

Countable nouns can be counted. They have singular and plural forms. We can use **a/an** before them in the singular and **some, any** or **no** in the plural.

❖ **Formation of the plural of nouns**

- The plural of a noun is usually made by adding '**s**' to the singular (regular nouns) :
day, days dog, dogs house, houses
's' is pronounced /**s**/ after p, t, k, or f sound : cups, pots, books, stops,....
's' is pronounced /**iz**/ after s, z, ce, ge, re sounds : buses, sizes, bridges, oranges, ...
's' is pronounced /**z**/ after b, d, g, : dogs, apples, doors, shoes, ...
- Nouns ending in **ch, sh, ss, o, x** form their plural by adding **es** to the singular :
watch → watch**es** brush → brush**es** box → box**es**
glass → glass**es**
tomato → tomato**es** hero → hero**es** BUT video → video**s** radio → radio**s**
BUT words of foreign origin or abbreviated words ending in '**o**', add '**s**' only :
dynamo → dynamo**s** piano → piano**s**
kilo → kilo**s** photo → photo**s**
- Nouns ending in '**y**' following a **consonant** form their plural by dropping the '**y**' and adding **ies** :
baby → baby**ies** lady → lady**ies** country → country**ies**
fly → fly**ies** story → story**ies** army → army**ies**

BUT words ending in 'y' following a **vowel** form their plural by adding an 's' :

boy → **boys**

day → **days**

donkey → **donkeys**

play → **plays**

key → **keys**

guy → **guys**

- Some nouns end in **f** or **fe** ; these letters are dropped and replaced by **ves** :
calf, half, knife, leaf, life, sheaf, loaf, shelf, thief, wife, wolf, self. → calves, halves, ...

BUT - the nouns scarf, wharf, hoof take either 's' or 'ves' : scarfs/ scarves

Other words ending in **f** or **fe** are added an 's' in the ordinary way :

cliff → **cliffs** handkerchief → handkerchief**s** safe → **safes**

roof → **roofs** belief → belief**s**

- A few nouns form their plural by a vowel change (irregular nouns) :

man → **men**

woman → **women**

child → **children**

ox → **oxen**

tooth → **teeth**

goose → **geese**

foot → **feet**

mouse → **mice**

louse → **lice**

- Certain words are always plural and take a plural verb: **clothes, belongings, goods, surroundings, thanks, remains, stairs, proceeds, congratulations, groceries, ... + police**

e.g. Her **clothes** are always fashionable.

Good **manners** are important.

+ words referring to clothes/things consisting of two parts (trousers, pyjamas, jeans, shorts, glasses, binoculars, scissors...) . e.g. These trousers are tight.

BUT This is a good pair of scissors.

- Some words have the same form in the singular and plural :

crossroads, means, series, species, brackets. + sheep, deer, salmon, trout, aircraft, fish.

→ Fish is normally unchanged. Fish**es** is used in **biology** to refer to multiple **species** of fish.

e.g. The telephone is a **means** of communication.

There are several **means** of solving the problem.

- Some words ending in 's' or 'ics' are singular /uncountable and take a singular verb :

athletics, gymnastics, physics, politics, statistics, electronics, mathematics, ethics + rabies, diabetes, mumps, cards, billiards, bowls, dominos, news...

e.g. Maths is my favourite subject.

Statistics was a difficult course.

- Irregular plurals concern also foreign nouns:

bacterium → bacter ia	axis → axes	crisis → crisi es
curriculum → curricul a	analysis → analys es	parenthesis → parenthes es
datum → dat a	basis → bas es	thesis → thes es
stimulus → stimul i	syllabus → syllabi	phenomenon → phenomen a

- Sometimes, there are two plural forms with different meanings :
- appendix → appendi**ces**/ appendi**xes** (medical term) / appendi**ces** (addition to a book)
- Initials can be made plural : **MPs** (Members of Parliament) - **VIPs** (Very Important Persons)

❖ Collective Nouns

- **Collective** nouns describe groups of people, things or animals: **family, team, group, audience, class, government crew, staff** etc. These nouns take a **plural** verb if they refer to the members of the group **individually**, and a **singular** verb if they refer to the group as a **unit**.

My **family is/are** planning to go on a trip to Australia.

Further examples: team, band, group, club, troupe, gang, choir, public, crew, army, navy, class, audience, staff, family, police, committee, union, jury, firm, government, parliament, senate, society, faculty, department, minority, orchestra, panel, bunch, shoal, cattle, herd, flock, ...

→ When the collective noun refers to a group as a single unit, it takes a singular verb.

- Some sociologists claim that the American **family is** no longer functioning.
- **The public isn't** really interested in what **the government is** doing unless **it increases** taxes.
- **The town council has** approved plans to create a new park.
- The **flock of birds flies** south for the winter.

→ When the collective noun refers to a group's members as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

- The **Rogers family have moved** from **their** old house.
- The **public are** more likely to complain if **they have** to pay more taxes.
- After taking a test, the **class start their** research papers on famous

bacterium → bacteria	axis → axes	crisis → crises
curriculum → curricula	analysis → analyses	parenthesis → parentheses
datum → data	basis → bases	thesis → theses
stimulus → stimuli	syllabus → syllabi	phenomenon → phenomena

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- The **public are** more likely to complain if **they have** to pay more taxes.
- After taking a test, the **class start their** research papers on famous

mathematicians.

- **The jury disagree** about the guilt of the accused and have told the judge that **they are** hopelessly deadlocked.

➤ Uncountable nouns

Uncountable nouns cannot be counted and have no plural form. We don't use the indefinite article **a/an** and **numbers** before them. **Uncountable nouns** may be:

Food	meat, cheese, bread, butter, fruit, food, rice, etc.
Liquids	milk, water, soda, juice, coffee, tea etc.
Material	glass, wood, paper, steel, iron, gold, silver etc.
Abstract nouns	freedom, beauty, honesty, justice, love, advice, time etc.
Natural Phenomena	weather, heat, snow, lightning, rain, wind, thunder etc.
Some Concrete Nouns	baggage, luggage, furniture, money, news, information, business, work, knowledge, traffic, measles, economics etc.

• We use the words **some, any, a lot of, much, little, a piece of** to define the quantity of uncountable nouns. For example:

- a piece of advice/news/information
- a lot of money/work/traffic

• We can also use the words **cup, bottle, glass, jar, piece, loaf, packet, can, carton** etc. to define the quantity of uncountable nouns which describe food and liquids.

a **loaf** of bread two **cans** of cola four **cartons** of milk a **bowl** of rice

• Some nouns like **hair, wood, light, glass** etc. can be used as **countable** nouns in the plural form, but the meaning is different.

Uncountable	Countable
There's a lot of light in this room because it's got a big window. This bottle is made of glass .	I can't see a thing. Turn on the lights ! I wear my glasses every day.

Compound nouns

A **compound noun** is a noun consisting of **two or more words** working together **as a single unit** to name a person, place, or thing. Compound nouns are usually made up of two nouns or an adjective and a noun, but other combinations are also possible, as well.

TYPE	SINGULAR	PLURAL FORM
noun + noun ing+ noun adjective + noun	housewife television screen dining room greenhouse others: Backpack - bathroom - bathtub – bedroom - bus stop - fish tank - football - handbag - motorcycle - shopkeeper - tablecloth - toothpaste - wallpaper - water bottle - website wristwatch full moon - blackberry - blackbird - blackboard - cell(ular) phone - mobile phone - hardware highway - greenhouse - redhead - six- pack - small talk - software – whiteboard – washing machine	We use the plural of the (second) noun: housewives, television screens dining rooms, greenhouses
noun + preposition noun + preposition + noun	passer-by sister-in-law	We use the plural of the first noun: passers-by, sisters-in-law
no noun	take-off	We add-s to the last word: take-offs

Other combinations

Although the *noun + noun* and *adjective + noun* combinations are the most common, there are also plenty of other possibilities for forming compound nouns. For example:

Combination	Examples
noun + verb	haircut, rainfall, sunrise, sunset
noun + preposition	hanger-on, passerby
noun + prepositional phrase	brother-in-law, mother-in-law
verb + noun	breakfast, washing machine, runway, pickpocket, swimming pool
preposition + noun	bystander, influx, onlooker, underpants, upstairs, byproduct, outburst
verb + preposition	check-in, checkout/check-out, drawback, lookout, makeup
adjective + verb	dry cleaning, public speaking
preposition + verb	input, output, overthrow, upturn
noun + adjective	cupful, spoonful

❖ The three written forms of compound nouns

There are three ways to write a compound noun:

- First, **open compound nouns** (or **spaced compound nouns**) are those that are written as two separate words, such as *washing machine*, *swimming pool*, and *water bottle*.

- Second, there are **hyphenated compound nouns**, as in *check-in*, *hanger-on*, and *mother-in-law*.
- Third, there are **closed compound nouns** (or **solid compound nouns**)—those that are written as one word, such as *rainfall*, *drawback*, and *toothpaste*.

There aren't any rules that tell us which of the three forms is acceptable for a particular compound noun. Some compound nouns are commonly written in two forms, as in *website* / *web site* or *checkout* / *check-out*, while others, such as *bus stop*, are strictly used in one form.

If you're not sure which of the three forms to use, it's important to check a good, up-to-date dictionary.

Finally, remember that, no matter which way the compound noun is written, it always functions grammatically as a single unit.

❖ Pluralizing compound nouns

We usually pluralize a compound noun by adding an **"-s"** or **"-es"** to the **main** word, or the **defining** word, of the compound noun. This is **usually** the **second** word, but not always. For example:

Singular	Plural
bedroom	bedrooms
football	footballs
water bottle	water bottles
full moon	full moons

BUT

Singular	Plural
secretary general	secretaries general
mother-in-law	mothers -in-law
passerby / passer-by	passers by / passers -by

When it's not obvious which of the words is the defining word, we pluralize the end of it. For example:

Singular	Plural
haircut	hair cuts
check-in	check- ins

checkout / check-out	checkouts / check-outs
upturn	upturns

Possessive Case

The Possessive Case shows **who** something belongs to and answers questions beginning with **whose**. It is usually used with nouns which refer to people and animals. Whose car is this? It's Mr Brown's.

Formation of the Possessive Case

- **Singular** nouns and the words **someone, somebody, nobody** etc. take 's:
a woman's life - the cat's milk - someone's job - John's computer - everybody's problem
- **Regular plural** nouns take 's:
the boys' bedroom - the students' books - my parents' car
- **Irregular plural** nouns take 's:
the men's clothes - the children's toys
- **Proper nouns** ending in -s can take 's or ' :
Chris's shirt **OR** Chris' shirt
- We use 's after **compound nouns, time expressions** and **idioms**:
my father-in-law's car - today's weather - a week's delay - for heaven's sake - tomorrow's newspapers

NOTE

- When two or more people own the **same** thing, we add the possessive case to the **last owner**:
Susan and Ian's daughter – Hassina and Salim's children – Lamia and Selma's parents
- When two or more people own **different** things, we add the possessive case to **each owner**:
George's and Andrew's desks – Sami's and Amine's diplomas
- We can **omit** the noun which follows the possessive case if it is easy to understand or

refers to a place:

My bedroom is next to my brother's (bedroom). Don't forget to go to the baker's (shop).

❖ Gender of nouns

There are three genders in English :

Masculine (belongs to the male) : man, boy, husband, bull, ... (he/his/him)

Feminine (belongs to the female) : woman, girl, wife, cow, ... (she/her/hers)

Neuter (belongs to neither) → inanimate things, animals : table, bag, elephant, cat, ... (it/its)

Exceptions :

Ships, cars, countries when regarded with affection/respect are considered feminine.

e.g.

- The ship/Titanic hit an iceberg which tore a huge hole in her side.
- Scotland lost many of her bravest men in two great rebellions.
- Algeria won her independence from France after a long war.

Some abstract nouns which are noted for strength and greatness are in the masculine gender.

e.g. *the sun, anger, death, war, summer, ocean, time, love,*

Others are noted for beauty, gentleness, weakness are in the feminine gender.

e.g. *the moon, the earth, hope, charity, liberty, fame, faith, justice, life, truth,*

❖ Formation of Feminine/ Masculine

Most nouns have the same form for masculine and feminine (common gender): **parent, child, infant, cousin, baby, friend, student, guest, teenager, teacher, journalist, artist, doctor, leader, dancer, speaker, artist, rider, author, prisoner, cook, leader, colleague, teenager,**

However, some nouns have different forms for the masculine and feminine:

Man ≠ woman

lord ≠ lady

Boy ≠ girl	monk ≠ nun
brother ≠ sister	widower ≠ widow
son ≠ daughter	gentleman ≠ lady
father ≠ mother	nephew ≠ niece
duke ≠ duchess	bridegroom ≠ bride
hero ≠ heroine	uncle ≠ aunt
husband ≠ wife	king ≠ queen

→ It is also the case for many domestic and wild animals:

bull ≠ cow	duck ≠ drake
stallion ≠ mare	gander ≠ goose
cock ≠ hen	fox ≠ vixen
dog ≠ bitch	stag ≠ doe

- Some nouns form the feminine by adding **ess** to the masculine :

prince ≠ princess	lion ≠ lioness
conductor ≠ conductress	tiger ≠ tigress
actor ≠ actress	waiter ≠ waitress
heir ≠ heiress	host ≠ hostess

- Some nouns form the feminine by changing a word that is before or after the masculine noun :

land-lord ≠ land-lady	male-servant ≠ female-servant
salesman ≠ saleswoman	chairman ≠ chairwoman