Nouns

Nouns are among the first lessons when studying a new language. In other words, we have to be able to name things first, then make sentences with them.

What Are Nouns?

Nouns are the words used to name people, things, places, ideas, or concepts. They are the largest class of words in most languages, including English.

A noun is a word that refers to:

- A Person: Adam, doctor, sister, student
- A Place: home, New York, office, village
- An Object: chair, stair, hammer
- An Animal: snake, mouse, fish, bear
- An Idea: confusion, kindness, joy
- A Quality: softness, darkness, roughness
- An Action: cooking, playing, swimming

Types of Nouns

Nouns can be categorized into different groups based on various criteria. Each group has unique *functions* and *specific characteristics*.

1. Based on Uniqueness or Commonality

2. Based on Physicality or Abstractness

3. Based on Countability

4. Based on Word-Formation Processes

5. Based on Gender

6. Based on Grammatical Functions

Based on Uniqueness or Commonality

Based on whether they refer to a *specific entity* or <u>not</u>, **nouns** can be categorized into two groups:

1. *Common Nouns*

Common nouns refer to a non-specific noun, while **proper nouns** refer to specific nouns. **Common nouns** are not capitalized unless they come at the beginning of a sentence. **Proper nouns** should always be capitalized. Take a look at the following examples:

> ## They gave Alan his own show.
>
> * 'Adam' is a proper noun therefore is capitalized even at the middle of the sentence.
>
> ## The room was full of guests.
>
> * The noun 'room' is a common noun and is not capitalized.

Based on Physicality or Abstractness

Nouns can be categorized into two groups based on whether they are *tangible* or *visible* or not:

> 1. *Abstract Nouns*
>
> 2. *Concrete Nouns*

Abstract nouns refer to *intangible* entities such as concepts, ideas, or emotions. They cannot be experienced through the five senses and include words like 'love,' 'honesty,' and 'bravery.' **Concrete nouns**, on the other hand, refer to *tangible* entities that can be identified through the senses, such as 'telephone,' 'noise,' and 'car. Pay attention to the examples:

> ## The bed was covered with flowers.
>
> ## Everyone is not lucky enough to find love in real life.

Based on Countability

Singular or Plural Nouns

Nouns can be categorized into two groups based on their *quantity* or *number*:

> 1. *Singular Nouns*
>
> 2. *Plural Nouns*

Singular nouns refer to a single entity, while **plural nouns** refer to multiple entities. **Singular nouns** are preceded by the articles 'a' or 'an,' while **plural nouns** are indicated by the addition of the letters 's' or 'es' at the end of the word. For example, 'bag' and 'apple' are singular nouns, while 'buses,' 'books,' and 'families' are plural nouns. Take a look at the examples:

> ## It is worth a try.

The **students** in the class were all wearing different colored **shirts**.

Collective Nouns

A '<u>collective Noun</u>' refers to a *group* of individuals or things regarded as a <u>single entity</u>, such as 'team' or 'group. For example:

The **audience** was taking notes of everything.

 * 'Audience' are a collection of people that listen and watch a performance.

My **family** lives in Tokyo.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

<u>Nouns</u> can be categorized into <u>two</u> groups based on whether they can be *counted* or not:

1. *Countable Nouns*
2. *Uncountable Nouns*

Countable nouns have <u>plural</u> forms and can be *quantified* with a number, such as 'one chair' or 'three chairs.' **Uncountable nouns**, on the other hand, <u>cannot</u> be *pluralized* or *quantified* with a number, such as 'water,' 'sugar,' and 'wood.' Here are some examples for clarity:

The cat was drinking its **milk** from the bowl.

 * 'Milk' is an uncountable noun.

There were millions of **worms** under the ground.

 * 'Worms' are countable nouns.

The **cat** was drinking its **milk** from the **bowl**.

Plural-only Nouns

Some nouns are only used in the **plural form** and <u>cannot</u> be counted or quantified with numbers.

Wear your glasses there is a hot sun outside.

 * 'Eyeglasses' or 'glasses' are always used in plural form.

Your son looks cute in those shorts.

Based on Word-Formation Processes

Compound Nouns

'<u>Compound Nouns</u>' are made up of two or more words. There are <u>three types</u> of compound nouns in English:

- The closed form (which are written as one word): basketball, wallpaper, grandmother
- The open form (which are spelled as two separate words): ice cream, field hockey, distance learning
- The hyphenated form (two or more words are joined by a hyphen): long-term, mother-in-law, check-in

They have put a wooden drawer in their bedrooms.

John must be her son-in-low.

Derivation

<u>Derivation</u> is the process of creating new words with a <u>different word class</u> by adding affixes, prefixes, or suffixes. In English, some nouns are formed by adding these elements to other words.

For example, by adding '-er/-or/-ar', '-ion/-tion', '-ment', '-ness', etc. to some <u>verbs</u> we can have different nouns. Pay attention to the following examples:

He is a famous actor.

 * Here by adding 'or' to the verb act we made the noun actor.

Children often have a very active imagination, which can lead to playfulness.

Based on Gender

A '<u>gender-specific noun</u>' refers specifically to either males or females. In some languages, nouns are classified into three genders:

1. *Masculine nouns*
2. *Feminine nouns*

Most nouns in English are considered <u>gender-neutral</u>. However, if a noun refers to something that is clearly *male* or *female*, its gender will be determined by <u>its meaning</u> and classified as masculine or feminine.

For example Rooster (Gender-specific masculine), hen (Gender-specific feminine), and chicken (neutral). Have a look:

> Her **husband** works at a hospital.
>
> * 'Husband' is a masculine noun.
>
> The **queen** has a diamond ring that is missing at the moment.

Based on Grammatical Functions

Verbal Nouns

'<u>Verbal Nouns</u>' or gerunds, are words *derived* from **verbs** that *function* as **nouns**. In English, all gerunds end in the suffix **'-ing.'** Examples include 'playing,' 'singing,' and 'drawing'. Take a look at the examples below:

> **Swimming** is the hardest thing I have ever learned.
>
> I was busy **reading** your essays.

Appositive Nouns

'<u>Appositive noun</u>' (also called attributive noun adjunct, qualifying noun, <u>noun modifier</u>), is a **noun** that immediately follows and modifies another **noun**. The *first* noun serves as a <u>modifier</u> for the *second* noun, but <u>can be omitted</u> without changing the meaning of the sentence.

> His present, the **golden watch**, has been sent to Emily two days ago.
>
> Tonight's dinner, **chicken soup**, was really disgusting.

The Function of Nouns

Nouns are categorized into <u>three</u> main groups based on their functions:

> - As a *<u>subject</u>*
> - As an *<u>object</u>* (*direct, indirect, retained, object of prepositions*)
> - As a *subject and <u>object complement</u>*

Nouns as Subjects

Nouns can serve as the subject of a sentence, indicating that the sentence is either *about* the noun or that the noun is *performing* the action of the verb. In affirmative sentences, the subject typically appears at the *beginning* of the sentence.

Claudia is a Russian dentist that lives in Italy.

The organization is considered one of the best ones in this area.

Nouns as Objects

As 'objects,' nouns can be *direct object*, *indirect object*, retained objects, and the objects of the prepositions. Let us explain them one by one to avoid any confusion.

Direct Object & Indirect Object

The 'direct object' of a verb is a noun or a noun phrase that receives the action of a transitive verb.

An indirect object is a noun or pronoun in a sentence that identifies *to* or *for* whom or what the action of the verb is performed. The indirect object usually comes between the verb and the direct object (if there is one).Take a look at the examples below:

Can you please pass me the keys?

* Here, 'the keys' is the direct object, and 'me' is the indirect object for whom the action is performed.

I made my sister a cup of tea.

Object of Preposition

The 'object of a preposition' is a *noun* or a *noun phrase* that is used *after* a *preposition* as an object. Have a look:

Take a look! Maybe it is on the counter.

Put the books in the small closet.

Retained Object

A retained object is a noun or noun phrase used as the *direct* or *indirect* object in a passive sentence, where the verb is in the passive voice. Look at these examples:

She was given the key to their beach house.

They were invited to the party.

Nouns as Subject or Object Complements

A subject complement is a noun or noun phrase used in a sentence to *rename* or *define* the subject. It's important to note that subject complements can also be adjectives.

An object complement, on the other hand, provides more information about the object of a sentence. For example:

That girl standing over there is **Hanna**.

I found him **reading** books.

* Here, 'him' is the object and 'reading' is the object complement.

> **Flexibility of Words!**
>
> Remember, some words can function as multiple parts of speech, such as being both a noun and a verb. For example, 'run', 'cook', 'travel', etc.

Uses

Noun Phrase

In English, a noun is often accompanied by a *modifier* or *article* ('a/an' or 'the'), forming what is called **a noun phrase**. A noun phrase is a word or group of words that functions as a noun and can serve as a *subject*, *object*, *complement*, or *object of a preposition* in a sentence.Take a look at the following example:

They were in **the campus of the university**.

She called **the driver of the car**.

Noun Clause

A '<u>noun clause</u>' is a group of words that functions as a noun. <u>Unlike</u> a noun phrase, a noun clause contains both a *subject* and a *verb*. Noun clauses are always dependent clauses and do <u>not</u> form a complete sentence on their own. Have a look:

He can invite **whomever he wants**.

Whether he invites Jack or not is his business.

Positions of Nouns

Most often, nouns follow a *determiner* or an *adjective*. While it is not always the case, usually there is a determiner or an adjective *before* the noun. Here are some examples :

She has <u>a</u> <u>nice</u> **car**.

I love <u>the</u> <u>beautiful</u> **girl**.

Review

Nouns are categorized into different groups based on different criteria. Here are the most important categories of nouns.

- *countable and uncountable nouns*
- *abstract and concrete nouns*
- *singular and plural nouns*
- *common and proper nouns*

Nouns can be used as:

- *subjects*
- *objects*
- *subject or object complements*

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Compound Nouns

Compound nouns are formed when two or more words are joined together to create a new word that has an entirely new meaning.

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