



# The Parts of Speech

## A review for ESOL students

There are nine parts of speech. They are [articles](#), [nouns](#), [pronouns](#), [adjectives](#), [verbs](#), [adverbs](#), [conjunctions](#), [prepositions](#), and [interjections](#). A word of [caution](#), however, a word can be more than one part of speech. You can find out more information on the parts of speech by checking the [sources](#) listed at the bottom of this review.

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## Nouns

A noun is a word used to name something: a person/animal, a place, a thing, or an idea. For example, all of the following are nouns.

- Leah, Ignacio, Lan, Marek
- Japan, Venezuela, Atlanta, Kroger, the Gap
- pencil, store, music, air
- biology, theory of Relativity, Pythagorean theory



**Hint:** They are sometimes preceded by noun markers. Noun markers are also called determiners and quantifiers. They are words like *a, an, the, this, that, these, those, each, some, any, every, no, numbers (1,2,3,etc.), several, many, a lot, few, possessive pronouns (his, her, etc)*. See determiners for more information.



## Nouns are classified in several ways...

1. **Nouns can be singular or plural.**

**Singular nouns** name only one person, place, thing or idea.

*One apple, a pencil, the book*

**Plural nouns** name two or more persons, places, things or ideas. Most singular nouns (Not ALL) are made plural by adding –s. For example, (*pencil* is a singular noun. The word *pencils* is a plural noun.)



**Exception #1:** If a noun ends with the –s, sh, ch, or x like the words, *kiss, church, ash or box*, then they are made plural by adding –es (*kisses, churches, ashes, and boxes*).



**Exception #2:** There are also irregular nouns that do not follow any rules. For example, the plural form of the word *child* is *children*.

◦ **Nouns can be Proper Nouns or Common Nouns**

- **A. Proper nouns** refer to specific people, places, things and ideas. A person's name (Leah Graham) is a proper noun, for example. Other examples are names of places (Atlanta, Georgia) and names of things (the Navy). **They are always capitalized!**
  - People's names and titles- King Henry, Mrs. Smith
  - Names for deity, religions, religious followers, and sacred books- God, Allah, Buddha, Islam, Catholicism, Christians
  - Races, nationalities, tribes, and languages- *African American, Polish-American, Black, Chinese, Russian*
  - Specific Places like countries, cities, bodies of water, streets, buildings, and parks
  - Specific organizations- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), ....
  - Days of the week, months, and holidays,
  - Brand names of products
  - Historical periods, well-known events, and documents- *Middle ages, Boston Tea Party, Magna Carta*
  - Titles of publications and written documents

**b. Common nouns** are all other nouns. For example: *cat, pencil, paper, etc.* They are not capitalized unless they are the first word in the sentence.

• **Nouns can also be collective.**

Collective nouns are nouns that are grammatically considered singular, but include more than one person, place, thing, or idea in its meaning. Words like *team, group, jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, team, couple, band, herd, quartet, and society*.

Generally, collective nouns are treated as singular because they emphasize the group as one unit.

The *committee* is going to make a decision.

- **Nouns can also be either count or non-count.**

Nouns that are non-count cannot be counted. **For example,**

one cannot go outside to have two fresh airs. One goes outside for fresh *air*.

## 5. Nouns can be Abstract or concrete

- Concrete nouns are nouns that you can touch. They are people, places, and some things. Words like *person, court, Georgia, pencil, hand, paper, car, and door* are all examples of concrete nouns.
- Abstract nouns are nouns that cannot be physically held. For example, things like *air, justice, safety, Democracy, faith, religion, etc.*

## 6. Nouns can be Gerunds

A gerund is the -ing form of the verb and is used as a noun. For example,

*Running* is good for you.

*Running* is the noun/gerund and *is* is the verb.

My *crying* upset him.

*Crying* is the subject and *upset* is the verb



**Note:** A noun can fit into more than one of these categories. For example, the noun *Angela* is a singular, concrete, count, proper noun.



## Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. They eliminate the need for repetition.

**For Example:**

Instead of *Emma talked to Emma's child*, you might say *Emma talked to her child*.

**Her** is the pronoun. It renames the antecedent, *Emma*.



**There are several types of pronouns.**

Personal Pronouns refer to specific persons or things. Personal pronouns can act as subjects, objects, or possessives.

**Singular:** I, me, you, she, her, he, him, it

**Plural:** we, us, you, they, them

*I, you, she, he, it, we, and they* are used as subjects of sentences.

**For example,** *She* knew the grammar rules very well.

The personal pronouns that can be used as **objects** are:

**Me, you, him, her, it, them**

**For Example:**

- **The teacher gave all of** *them* **good grades.**
- **Tommy gave his poetry book to** *her*.
- **Then, Azra gave it to** *me*.

*Them, her* and *me* are personal pronouns used as objects. They are **NEVER** the subjects of the sentences.

- **Possessive Pronouns** indicate ownership or possession.

**Singular:** my, mine, your, yours, hers, his, its

**Plural:** yours, ours, theirs,

For Example: *She* returned *my* pencil to me because it was *mine*.

**3. Reflexive Pronouns** name a receiver of an action who is identical to the doer of the action.

Singular: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself

Plural: ourselves, yourselves, themselves

For example: *Manuela* congratulated *herself* on her good grades.

Here, *Manuela* is both the doer and the receiver of the action.

**Q: So, who did Manuela congratulate? A: Herself.**

**4. Intensive Pronouns** emphasize a noun or another pronoun.

Singular: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself

Plural: ourselves, yourselves, themselves

**For Example:** **I** saw **Brad Pitt** *himself* at the mall.

Here, *himself* emphasizes the antecedent, Bradd Pitt.

**5. Reciprocal Pronouns** express shared actions or feelings. They are:

## Each other One another

### For Example:

**Yan Ko and Tai help each other with their homework.**

**Leon and his girlfriend dance with one another when they go clubbing.**

**6. Indefinite Pronouns** refer to non-specific persons and things.

All, another, any, anybody, anyone, anything, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, nothing, one, several, some, somebody, someone, something

### For Example:

*Many believe that UFO's exist, but nobody can prove it.*

*No one can be sure if aliens really exist, but only few wonder if Elvis is still alive.*

The underlined indefinite pronouns do not refer to any one person. They are referring to people in general.

**7. Demonstrative Pronouns** are also considered noun markers. They "point" towards nouns.

**this, that, these those**

### For Example:

*That woman attends Gainesville College.*

*That* points out which woman.

**The woman attends Gainesville College.**

**Q: Which woman? A: That woman.**

**8. Interrogative Pronouns** introduce questions.

Who, Whom, Whose, Which, What

### For Example:

*Who is going on vacation? To whom will the teacher give an "A"?*

*What are you doing?*

**9. Relative Pronouns** introduce dependent clauses and refers to a person or thing already mentioned in the sentence (i.e. the antecedent).

Who, whoever, whom, whomever, whose, which, that

### For Example:

**The English that we learn in class will help us pass English 1101.**

that we learn in class is the adjective clause that describes *English*. And, *that* is the relative pronoun.

**Q:** Which English?

**A:** The English that we learn in class—as opposed to the English we learn around our friends.



**Note:** Adjectives clauses modify nouns or pronouns, and usually answer one of the following questions: *Which one? What kind of?* They begin with a relative pronoun or a relative adverb (when or where).



## Adjectives

An adjective modifies (describes) a noun or pronoun.

Normally in English, the adjective comes before the noun. **For example:**

**The smart student earned an "A".**

They also come after linking verbs. **For example:**

**I feel happy.**

**Adjectives can be used to make comparisons.**

- For most adjectives of one or two syllables, you can add –er. For example, greater, faster, stronger.
- For adjectives longer than two syllables, you should use the word *more*.

For example, *He was more intelligent than his sister was.*

**Adjectives can also be used as superlatives.**

- This is usually done by adding –est to the end of an adjective that is one or two syllables.

For example, *the loudest, the coolest, the smartest.*

- If an adjective is three syllables or longer, you must use the words *the most*. For example:

*Katsu is the most intelligent person in the world!*



**WARNING-** Never use both an *-er* ending and the word *more* or an

*-est* ending and the word *most*.

For example, *I am the **most happiest** when my students learn.* Instead, it should be: *I am the **happiest** when my students learn.*

There are some irregular adjective and adverb forms. For example:

Adjective	Adverb	Comparing two	Comparing three or more
Bad	badly	Worse	worst
Good	Well	Better	Best
Little		Less	Least
Much	Many	More	Most



**Punctuation Note:** Adjectives are not usually capitalized unless they are the first word in a sentence. **BUT**, nationalities are also adjectives and should be capitalized. For example:

*Ricky Martin is Puerto Rican and Michelle Yeoh is Chinese.*

These are called proper adjectives. And, like proper nouns, **proper adjectives** are always capitalized in English. They are derived from proper nouns and are words like: *African-American, Vietnamese, Latino, Italian, Japanese, Korean, etc.* They can also include adjectives like *Catholic, Jewish, Republican, Democrat, etc.*

When they are used together, they are arranged in a certain order.

Determiner*	Opinion	Size	Age	Color	Origin	Material	Noun
<i>The, This</i>	<i>Pretty</i>	<i>Big</i>	<i>New</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Puerto Rican</i>	<i>Leather</i>	<i>Sofa</i>
<i>Some</i>	<i>Tall</i>	<i>Thin</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Purple</i>		<i>Wood</i>	
<i>My</i>	<i>Expensive</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Ancient</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Silk</i>	<i>Scarf</i>

**For Example:**

**I** *saw* **that tall, thin, old, blue, silk** scarf at the store and I bought it.

**Leon** *drives* **an expensive old Italian** car.



You wouldn't ordinarily use so many adjectives in just one sentence.



**\*Note:** Determiners include articles, demonstrative pronouns, indefinite pronouns and possessive pronouns.



## Adverbs

An adverb is a word that modifies an action verb, an adjective or another adverb.

- The teacher **carefully** graded the homework.

*Carefully* is an adverb that modifies the action verb *to grade*.

- Tommy was **extremely** enthusiastic about doing his homework.

*Extremely* is an adverb that modifies the adjective *enthusiastic*.

- Yan Ko ran out of the classroom **very** quickly.

*Very* is an adverb that modifies the adverb *quickly*.



**Warning:** You need an adjective after linking verbs...**NEVER** an adverb!

For example, *Tai* feels **bad** (*guilty*) when he has to leave class.

Here, *bad* is an adjective that modifies the proper noun *Tai*. It is an adjective because it follows the linking verb *to feel*.

**HOWEVER**, verbs like *look*, *sound*, *smell*, *feel*, and *taste* can function as either an action verb or a linking verb.

*Tai* feels **badly** (*to the touch*) after swimming in a chlorinated pool. His skin is really dry.

Here, *bad* is used in its adverbial form since it follows an action verb, *to feel*.

## Types of Adverbs:



- **Relative Adverbs** introduce questions and dependent adverbial clauses. They answer the questions *When?* and *Where?* They are:

When Where

**For Example:**

When I was young, I liked to play outside.

Q: When did I like to play outside? A: When I was young.

- **Adverbs of Frequency** indicate answer the question *how often?* They are:

Always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never

The students in ESOL 98 always study very hard.

They rarely forget to do their homework.



**NOTE:** Generally, these adverbs come before the verb; however there is an exception. In the case of the verb to be, the adverb of frequency comes after the verb. For example: Azra is always on time for class.



**C**

**Conjunctions** are the scotch tape of the grammatical world. They join together words and phrases. There are three kinds of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions.



## 1. Coordinating Conjunctions

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English. You can use the mnemonic device *fanboys* to remember them.

For

And

Nor

But

Or

Yet

So

They can be used with commas to create compound sentences. **For example:**

**Ignacio loves to dance, but Rocío has no rhythm.**

**Kyong Mee works hard, yet she still earns low grades.**



**Note:** A compound sentence is a sentence made up of two independent clauses. That is, a compound sentence is simply two complete sentences joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (i.e. a fanboys).

2. **Correlative Conjunctions** also join ideas, but they work in pairs. They are:

Both...and

neither...nor

whether...or

either...or

not only...but also

**For Example:**

**Not only am I happy about the grades, but I am also excited that you are learning!**

3. **Subordinating Conjunctions** join an independent clause to a subordinate clause. That is, they join a clause that can stand alone with a clause that cannot stand alone. Some frequently used subordinating conjunctions are:

after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, while.

**For Example:**

**Although the students were tired, they still came to class.**

## Interjections

Interjections are words used to express emotional states. They can usually be found in narrative writing, interviews, and in spoken English. They can stand alone. For example:

*Oh!, wow!, Ouch! Oops! Hey!*



**Punctuation Note:** They are punctuated with either commas or exclamation marks. Mild interjections are followed by a comma, but stronger interjections are punctuated with an exclamation mark (!) .

Oh, *we're late for the movie.*

Generally, the movies is not an important destination. Therefore, the person making this statement will sound less urgent than the next example.

Oh! *I'm late for work.*

Work, unlike the movies, is generally considered a very important destination. If one doesn't arrive on time, there is the possibility of being fired or of losing face. Here, the speaker will have a greater sense of urgency.



Generally , you do not find interjections in academic writing.

## Prepositions

Prepositions are words that, like conjunctions, connect a noun or pronoun to another word in a sentence. Some common prepositions:

About	Before	Down	Into	Through
Above	Behind	During	Like	To
Across	Below	Except	Of	Toward
After	Beneath	For	Off	Under
Among	Beside	From	On	Up

Around	Between	In	Over	With
At	By	Instead of	Since	Without

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. They can act as adjectives or as adverbs.

Manuela, the student from Germany, wrote an excellent paper on the computer.



Verbs generally express action or a state of being. There are several classifications for verbs- action verbs,/linking verbs, main verbs/auxiliary verbs, transitive/intransitive and phrasal verbs.

**1. Action verbs** show action.

He *runs*. He *plays*. They *study*.

**2. Linking Verbs** link the subject to an adjective.

Ricky Martin *is* beautiful.

The linking verb *is* links the adjective *beautiful* with the subject *Ricky Martin*.

**1. Main verbs** can stand alone.

**2. Auxiliary verbs**, also called helping verbs, serve as support to the main verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are:

Have, has, had

Do, does, did

Be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been

Should, could, will, would, might, can, may, must, shall, ought (to)

**For example:**

Tai *has run* everyday.

*Run* is an action verb. The subject can actually "do" it.

*Has* is the helping verb. It helps the main verb *run* to be present perfect tense.

## Verbs can be transitive or intransitive.

- **Transitive Verbs** require a direct object in order to make sense.

### For Example:

**Yolanda takes aspirin for her headaches.**

Here, *takes* is a transitive verb since the sentence *Yolanda takes* has no meaning without its direct object *aspirin*.

- **Intransitive Verbs** do not need direct objects to make them meaningful. For Example:

**Julio swims.**

The verb *swim* has meaning for the reader without an object.



**Caution:** A verb can be either transitive or intransitive depending on its context. For Example:

**The cars race.** – Here, *race* is intransitive. It does not need an object.

**My father races horses.** – Here, *races* is transitive. It requires the object *horses* in order to make sense.

## Verbs can be phrasal.

1. Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and a preposition. The preposition gives the verb a different meaning than it would have by itself. For example, the verb *look* has a different meaning from the phrasal verb *look up* (in the dictionary).

### Some more examples:

call up, find out, hand in, make up, put off, turn on, write up



**WARNING:** The base form of a verb is called the infinitive. It is to + verb. For example, to do, to win, to study, etc. Under no circumstance can a verb preceded by *to* be considered a verb. **Infinitives are not verbs.**



**Articles** are *the*, *a*, and *an*.

**Q: What do articles do in a sentence?**

**A: Articles signal that a noun is going to follow.**

**Example:**

- Who invented **the** telephone? **The** wheel?

**The** refrigerator? **The** airplane?

- **A** cat was chasing **a** mouse in my back yard.

**Modifiers (adjectives & adverbs) can appear between an article and a noun.**

**Examples:**

- **A** sunset.
- **A** spectacular sunset.
- **An** exceptionally spectacular sunset.

**The indefinite article 'a' can only appear before nouns that begin with a consonant sound: **a** hand, **a** book, **a** world, **a** computer...**

**The indefinite article 'an' can only appear before nouns that begin with a vowel sound: **an** apartment, **an** hour, **an** article...**

## **General Rules for the Use of Articles:**

**I. Use a/an with *singular count nouns* whose specific identity is **not** known to the reader either because it is being mentioned for the *first time*, or because its specific identity is *unknown* even to the writer.**

**Examples:**

- Julia arrived in **a** limousine. (a = one among many. Not a specific one.)
- We're looking for **an** apartment. (an = any one.)

**II. Do **not** use a/an with non-count nouns. Only use a/an with non-count nouns if you add a count noun in front of the non-count noun.**

**Example:**

- Anh asked her mother for **an** advice.

- Anh asked her mother for **a**piece of

advice.

III. Use *the* with most nouns whose specific identity is *known* to the reader because:

1. the noun has been previously mentioned:

- Yesterday I saw **a** group of ESL students. **The** students were playing with **a** ball. **The** ball was white and blue. **The** ball rolled into **a** hole. **The** hole was small.

2. the noun is made specific by a superlative:

- I bought **the**fastest computer they had.

3. the noun describes a unique person, place, or thing:

- Please give this to **the**manager.
- **The**sun is bright today.
- Rain is falling heavily in **the**North.

4. the context or situation makes the noun's identity clear:

- Please don't slam **the** door when you leave.
- Bob warned me that **the** dog playing in his yard is very affectionate and jumps on every person it meets.

IV. Do **not** use *the* with plural or non-count nouns meaning "all" or "in general" (i.e. generic reference nouns). Do **not** use *the* with most singular proper nouns.

- *The* fountains are an expensive element of landscape design.
- In some parts of the world, **the** rice is preferred to all other grains.

V. Do **not** use articles with other *noun markers or determiners*, i.e. *possessive nouns* (Helen's) ; and *some pronouns* (his, her, its, ours, their, whose, this, that, these, those, all, any, each, either, every, few, many, more, most, much, neither, several, some).

*Exceptions:*

**All the...**

**A few...**

**The most...**

Examples:

- **The** Helen's book is on the floor.

- *A this book belongs to Trung.*



**A final caution-** A word can be more than one part of speech. **For example:**

I sat on the sofa.

Above, *sofa* is used as a noun (object of the preposition).

I slept on the sofa bed.

But, here *sofa* is used as an adjective to modify the noun *bed*.

And, native speakers often take poetic license with words in conversation. For example:

It's Sofa city for you!

Here, *sofa* acts as an adjective to describe the noun *city*. The meaning of the sentence is that the person will have to sleep on the sofa, not a bed.



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