

PARTS OF SPEECH

The Eight Parts of Speech

Learning the eight parts of speech helps you develop the working vocabulary necessary to discuss and study the language. You especially need to recognize the parts of speech in the context of sentences. That's because many words function in more than one role. Only by analyzing the sentence at hand can you see how a given word functions. It's unlikely that your boss will ask you to identify the parts of speech in a business document. Being able to do so, however, will help you punctuate correctly and choose precise words for clear, powerful writing. In addition, understanding the roles different parts of speech play in written and oral communication will be helpful if you learn another language.

NOUNS

In elementary school you probably learned that a noun refers to a person, place, or thing. In addition, nouns name qualities, feelings, concepts, activities, and measures.

Persons: Stephanie, Dr. Edelstein, teacher, accountant

Places: Chicago, island, Italy, college

Things: novel, surfboard, bicycle, horse

Qualities: patience, honesty, initiative, enthusiasm

Feelings: happiness, anger, confusion, sadness

Concepts: knowledge, freedom, friendship, travel

Activities: snowboarding, dancing, management, eating

Measures: day, week, inch, kilometer, million

Nouns are important words in our language. Sentences revolve around nouns because these words function both as subjects and as objects of verbs. To determine whether a word is really a noun, try using it with the verb *is* or *are*. Notice that all the nouns listed here would make sense if used in this way: *Stephanie is young, Chicago is in Illinois, horses are beautiful, dancing is fun*, and so on.

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words used in place of nouns. As noun substitutes, pronouns provide variety and efficiency. Compare these two versions of the same sentence:

Without pronouns: Scott gave the book to ***Kelli*** so that ***Kelli*** could use the book to study.

With pronouns: Scott gave the book to ***Kelli*** so that ***she*** could use it to study.

Subject	Object	Possessive Pron.	Possessive Adj.
1st person I We	me us	mine ours	my our
2nd person You	you	yours	your
3rd person He She It They	him her it them	his hers its theirs	his her it their

In sentences pronouns may function as subjects of verbs (for example, *I, we, they*) or as objects of verbs (for example, *me, us, them*). They may act as connectors (for example, *that, which, who*), and they may show possession (for example, *mine, ours, hers, theirs*). Please note that words such as *his, my, her, and its* are classified as adjectives when they describe nouns (*his car, my desk, its engine*).

VERBS

Verbs express an action, an occurrence, or a state of being.

Jason *built* an excellent Web site. (Action)

It *has* many links. (Occurrence)

He *is* proud of it. (State of being)

Action verbs show the action of a sentence. Some action verbs are *runs*, *studies*, *works*, and *fixes*. Verbs that express a state of being generally link to the subject words that describe or rename it.

Some linking verbs are *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, and *been*.

Other linking verbs express the senses: *feels*, *appears*, *tastes*, *sounds*, *seems*, *looks*.

It is important that you be able to recognize verbs so that you can determine whether sentences are complete. All sentences have at least one verb; many sentences will have more than one verb. Verbs may appear singly or in phrases.

Stacy *submitted* her application to become a management trainee. (Action verb)

Her résumé *is* just one page long. (Linking verb)

She *has been training* to become a manager. (Verb phrase)

Stacy *feels* bad that she *will be leaving* her current colleagues. (Linking verb and verb phrase)

ADJECTIVES

Words that describe nouns or pronouns are called adjectives. They often answer the questions What kind? How many? and Which one? The adjectives in the following sentences are italicized. Observe that the adjectives all answer questions about the nouns they describe.

Small, independent businesses are becoming *numerous*. (What kinds of businesses?)

We have *six* franchises in *four* states. (How many franchises? How many states?)

That chain of health clubs started as a *small* operation. (Which chain? What kind of operation?)

He is *energetic* and *forceful*, while she is *personable* and *deliberate*. (What pronouns do these adjectives describe?)

Adjectives usually precede nouns. They may, however, follow the words they describe, especially when used with linking verbs, as shown in the first and last preceding examples. Here is a brief list of words used as adjectives:

effective	green	sensitive
excellent	intelligent	small
expensive	long	successful

Three words (*a*, *an*, and *the*) form a special group of adjectives called **articles**.

ADVERBS

Words that modify (describe or limit) verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs are adverbs. Adverbs often answer the questions When? How? Where? and To what extent?

Today we must complete the project. (Must complete the project when?)

Mitch approached the intersection *cautiously*. (Approached how?)

He seems *especially* competent. (How competent?)

Did you see the schedule *there*? (Where?)

The prosecutor did not question him *further*. (Questioned him to what extent?)

Some of the most commonly used adverbs follow:

carefully	now	really	evenly	too
greatly	rather	very	only	soon

Many, but **not** all, words ending in *-ly* are adverbs. Some exceptions are *friendly*, *costly*, and *ugly*, all of which are *adjectives*.

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions join nouns and pronouns to other words in a sentence. As the word itself suggests (*pre* meaning “before”), a preposition is a word in a position *before* its object (a noun or pronoun). Prepositions are used in phrases to show a relationship between the object of the preposition and another word in the sentence. In the following sentence notice how the preposition changes the relation of the object (*Ms. Tokuyama*) to the verb (*talked*):

Brian often talked *with* Ms. Tokuyama.

Brian often talked *about* Ms. Tokuyama.

Brian often talked *to* Ms. Tokuyama.

Some of the most frequently used prepositions are *at*, *by*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *to*, and *with*. Learn to recognize *objects of prepositions* so that you won’t confuse them with sentence subjects.

CONJUNCTIONS

Words that connect other words or groups of words are conjunctions. The most common conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, and *nor*. These are called coordinating conjunctions because they join equal (coordinate) parts of sentences. Study the examples of coordinating conjunctions shown here:

Yukie, Dan, *and* Kristi are all looking for jobs. (Joins equal words.)

You may be interviewed by a human resources officer *or* by a supervising manager. (Joins equal groups of words.)

INTERJECTIONS

Words expressing strong feelings are interjections.

Interjections *standing alone* are followed by *exclamation marks*.

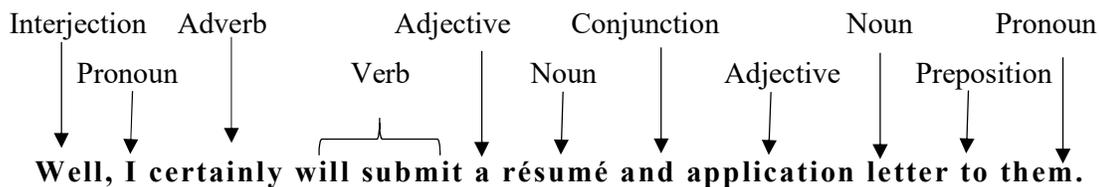
When woven into a sentence, they are usually followed by commas.

Wow! Did you see what she wrote in her e-mail message?

Oops! I forgot to send the attachment.

SUMMARY

The following sentence illustrates all eight parts of speech.



You need to know the functions of these eight parts of speech in order to understand the rest of this textbook and profit from your study of language basics. The explanation of the parts of speech has been kept simple so far. At this stage you should not expect to be able to identify the functions of *all* words in *all* sentences.

A word of caution: English is a wonderfully flexible language. As noted earlier, many words in our language serve as more than one part of speech. Notice how flexible the word *mail* is in these sentences:

Our *mail* is late today. (Noun—serves as subject of sentence)

This pile of *mail* must be delivered today. (Noun—serves as object of preposition)

Mail the letter today. (Verb—serves as action word in sentence)

Your voice **mail** box is full. (Adjective—used with voice to describe box, which is the subject of sentence)

PRACTICE

A. Choose the best alternative to complete each sentence.

- Names for persons, places, things, qualities, feelings, concepts, activities, and measures are _____.
 - verbs
 - adjectives
 - nouns
 - pronouns
- Words that substitute for nouns are _____.
 - adverbs
 - adjectives
 - interjections
 - pronouns
- The part of speech that answers the question What kind? and How many? is a/an _____.
 - adverb
 - adjective
 - preposition
 - conjunction
- Words such as slowly, very, and tomorrow that answer the questions How? and When? are _____.
 - adverbs
 - adjectives
 - nouns
 - conjunctions
- I, you, they, hers, and he are examples of _____.
 - pronouns
 - nouns
 - adverbs
 - adjectives
- Wow, well, and oops are examples of _____.
 - pronouns
 - prepositions
 - interjections
 - adjectives
- And, or, nor, and but are _____.
 - adverbs
 - prepositions
 - interjections
 - conjunctions
- Words such as by, in, and of that join noun or pronoun objects to other words in sentences are _____.
 - adverbs
 - prepositions
 - conjunctions
 - adjectives

B. In each of the following groups of sentences, one word is used as an adjective, as a noun, and as a verb. For each sentence indicate the part of speech for the italicized word.

Example: We have little *time* in which to make a decision. noun
Officials will *time* the runners in the marathon. verb
Factory workers must punch a *time* clock. adjective

1. He had to **dress** quickly for the awards ceremony. _____
2. Does your company have a **dress** code? _____
3. She decided to wear a suit instead of a **dress** to the interview. _____
4. Doug prefers a casual **work** environment. _____
5. Susan arrives at **work** early each morning. _____
6. The entire department **worked** overtime to finish the project. _____
7. Advertisements promised instruction from a **master** teacher. _____
8. Few students can **master** Web design in a short course. _____
9. Warren Buffet is a **master** in the field of investing. _____

Source: "Parts of Speech" **Cengage** https://www.cengage.com/resource_uploads/downloads/032436606X_215918.pdf (14 June 2019)
