

The Eight Parts Of Speech

A basic overview of the eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, conjunction, and interjection; what they are and what they do.

When determining the usage of words in sentences, it is helpful to understand the eight parts of speech. They are: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

The NOUN is the first of the eight parts of speech. Nouns name persons, places, things, or ideas. Examples of persons are: Mr. Johnson, mother, woman, and Maria. Examples of nouns used as places include: city, home, Texas, and Canada. A thing may be a noun similar to one of the following: house, ring, shoe, table, desk, month, or light. Nouns used as ideas might include: grief, democracy, courage, or obedience.

Nouns can be concrete or abstract. Concrete nouns can be touched. Abstract nouns (like love, bitterness, happiness, or joking) cannot be touched but are, nonetheless, still nouns because they name entities.

Nouns can be proper or common. Nouns that begin with a capital letter are proper nouns. They have a specific name or title and refer to a particular person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns do not begin with capital letters because they are less specific.

Here is a comparison: Common nouns are: country, language, mother, brother, teacher, pastor. Those same nouns as Proper nouns might be: England, German, Mother Theresa, Sammy, Ms. Holstrom, Pastor Hill.

A PRONOUN is said to "take the place of a noun," although a possessive pronoun can be used as an adjective. In general, pronouns can be personal, indefinite, interrogative, and demonstrative.

A list of personal pronouns includes: I, me, you, he, him, she, her, it, we, us, they, and them.

Possessive pronouns are: my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, and theirs. Note that there are no apostrophes used with possessive personal pronouns. This includes "its." Just as you would say "That is hers," you would say "Success is its own reward." "It's" stands for the contraction that represents "It is." "It's" is never possessive.

Indefinite pronouns include: anybody, anyone, each, either, none, someone, somebody, both, everyone, no one, neither, many, few, several, and one. Notice that some indefinite pronouns are singular, some are plural, and some may be used as both singular and plural.

Interrogative pronouns ask questions. They are: who, whom, what, which, and whose.

There are four demonstrative pronouns: this, that, these, and those.

The ADJECTIVE is the third of the eight parts of speech. Adjectives modify nouns. An adjective can modify a pronoun when it is used as a noun. Possessive pronouns can be used as adjectives. Example: That is his book.

Adjectives answer these questions about the noun:

WHAT KIND of noun is it?

WHICH noun is it?

HOW MANY of that noun are there?

"The," "a," and "an" are called articles. Articles are always adjectives. They always modify nouns.

A VERB is a word that expresses action, makes a statement, or shows a link between word relationships. Verbs can be used in different ways. They can be action or linking.

As the name implies, action verbs demonstrate "action." Example: Jim hit the ball.

Linking verbs make statements OR they express links and relationships.

Examples, statements:

She is a good girl.

He is a football player.

Examples, links/relationships:

She is my mother.

That boy is my neighbor.

Linking verbs include: am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been, has been, have been, had been, will be, shall be, may be, would have been, should have been, can be, should be, would be (any combination that ENDS with be or been.) seem, and become. The words taste, feel, smell, sound, look, appear, grow, remain, and stay may be used as action or linking verbs.

ADVERBS modify verbs. An adverb can also modify adjectives and other adverbs.

Adverbs answer these questions:

WHERE?

WHEN?

HOW?

HOW OFTEN?

TO WHAT EXTENT?

Commonly used Adverbs:

Here, there, away, up -- tell WHERE

Now, then, later, soon, yesterday -- tell WHEN

Easily, quietly, slowly, quickly -- tell HOW

Never, always, often, seldom -- tell HOW OFTEN

Very, almost, too, so, really -- tell TO WHAT EXTENT

The PREPOSITION is the sixth of the eight parts of speech. Prepositions show relationships between nouns or pronouns and other words in a sentence.

Commonly used prepositions are: aboard, about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, by, down, during, except, for, from, in, into, like, of, off, on, over, past, since, through, throughout, to, toward, under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, within, and without .

Prepositional phrases generally contain the preposition and an object of the preposition. Objects of the preposition MUST be nouns.

Here are some examples:

In bed ("In" is the preposition and "bed" is the noun used as the object of the preposition.)

To Texas ("To" is the preposition and "Texas" is the object of the preposition.)

A noun in a prepositional phrase may have modifiers. For example:

In the big bed (in, preposition / the, article / big, adjective / bed, noun)

To the grocery store (to, preposition/ the, article/ grocery, adjective / store, noun)

A word about "to." When "to" is used with a noun, it is a preposition; but when it is used with a verb, it is an infinitive. Be careful to recognize the difference. Examples:

To bed to plus noun = preposition

To sleep to plus verb = infinitive

CONJUNCTIONS are words that join words or groups of words. There are two main types of conjunctions. They are coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions include: and, or, but, for, & nor. These conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses of equal value. Clauses of equal value are called independent clauses and can stand on their own as separate sentences. Example: John is running in this race and I am carrying his water bottle. (Each clause can stand alone as a separate sentence: John is running in this race. I am carrying his water bottle.)

Subordinating conjunctions introduce dependent clauses. Dependent clauses cannot stand alone as a single sentence. In fact, the clause is "dependent" on the rest of the sentence for its meaning. Example: Since I will not be home, Tina will answer the phone. ("Since I will not be home" doesn't make sense by itself. It is dependent on the rest of the sentence for its meaning.)

The most commonly used subordinating conjunctions include: although, because, as, while, until, whether, since, after, so that, when, before, and if.

The INTERJECTION is the eighth part of speech. Interjections are exclamatory words that express strong emotion. Interjections have no other grammatical connection with or relationship to the rest of the sentence.

Interjections may be followed by either commas or exclamation points. Here are example of both instances:

Ouch! That hurt!

Oh, what a wonderful movie!

Great! What a terrific idea!

Aha! I've found your secret!

Alas, the poet was no more.

There you have it: eight little parts of speech that can make a **BIG** difference in how a sentence is used and what it means.