

DETERMINERS

Determiners help to define nouns (in terms of specificity – if it is definite or indefinite, in terms of number, in terms of ownership/possession, etc.).

EX:

A dog
The dog
This dog
That dog
His dog
Her dog
Their dog
One dog
Two dogs
All dogs
Some dogs

Determiners appear before nouns and any adjectives in a noun phrase.

EX:

The beautiful birds are flying away from us.

The noun phrase, THE BEAUTIFUL BIRDS, contains one determiner: THE. BEAUTIFUL is an adjective. And, BIRDS is the noun.

Remember: a noun phrase is a short group of words containing a noun and any of its modifiers (i.e., adjectives).

Common Determiners:

a, an, the, this, that, these, those, all, both, any, his, her, its, their, one, two, three, four, five, half, one quarter, one half, half, one third, two thirds, my, our

EXCEPTIONS

Complements are not generally considered Determiners unless there is an adjective describing the noun.

EX:

This house is mine.

Notice that MINE is not a determiner. MINE is a pronoun (possessive). However, THIS is a determiner.

EX:

The house is yours.

Notice that YOURS is not a determiner. YOURS is a pronoun (possessive). However, THE is a determiner.

EX:

This house is a blue a-frame.

Notice that BLUE is a determiner as it helps to define the noun.

EX:

This Terrier is my dog.

Notice that MY is a determiner. Moreover, THIS is a determiner.

INTERROGATIVE DETERMINERS

In an interrogative sentence (which is essentially a QUESTION), the WH- words which come before nouns are considered determiners.

Common Interrogative Determiners:

Which
What
Where
When
Why
Whose

EX:

Which car is yours?

WHICH is the determiner.

EX:

Whose coat is this?

WHOSE is the determiner.

PRE-DETERMINERS

Sometimes, a determiner precedes (or comes before) another determiner in a sentence. Almost all pre-determiners express quantity.

EX:

All the swimmers competed in the meet.

ALL is the pre-determiner, since it precedes THE.

POST-DETERMINERS

Sometimes, a determiner proceeds (or comes after) another determiner in a sentence. Almost all post-determiners express quantity.

EX:

The three crows perched on my porch.

THREE is the post-determiner, since it proceeds THE.

(Side note: MY is a determiner in this sentence).

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS AND POSSESSIVE DETERMINERS

One of the distinctions between a possessive pronoun and a possessive determiner is the question: Does the word help to define a noun? Or, is the word acting on its own to replace/substitute a noun?

For a possessive determiner, a noun always follows the determiner.

EX:

Their footballs need to be inflated. (POSSESSIVE DETERMINER)

THERE is the determiner. FOOTBALLS is the noun.

For a possessive pronoun, the pronoun acts alone.

EX:

This key is yours. (POSSESSIVE PRONOUN)

YOURS is the possessive pronoun.