

Grammar Parts of Speech

Some of the most common parts of speech are **nouns**, **pronouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives**, **adverbs**, **conjunctions**, and **prepositions**. For further information, see the UVSC Writing Center's handouts on these specific topics.

NOUNS

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

PROPER NOUNS

Proper nouns name specific people, places, or things and should be capitalized.

EXAMPLES: Dr. Johns, The Library of Congress, The Golden Gate Bridge

COMMON NOUNS

Common nouns are any nouns that are not proper.

EXAMPLES: doctor, library, bridge

PRONOUNS

Pronouns replace nouns or other pronouns in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. They usually replace nouns that directly precede them.

EXAMPLES: Mike crashed **his** bike the day **he** got **it**. (*He* and *his* refer to *Mike*; *it* refers to *bike*.)

The paper is not Sarah's; **hers** is about rainforests. (*Hers* replaces *Sarah's*.)

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative pronouns are words that relate clauses to the word (or words) the clauses modify. *That*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, and *whose* are all relative pronouns.

EXAMPLES: The girl **who** took Lisa's class loved it. (The phrase *who took Lisa's class* modifies *girl*.)

He sold the computer **that** broke. (*That broke* describes *computer*.)

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Possessive pronouns are pronouns that indicate ownership. They include words such as *my*, *mine*, *your*, *yours*, *his*, *her*, *hers*, *its*, *our*, *ours*, *their*, and *theirs*.

EXAMPLE: Libby is sad because **her** husband just lost *his* keys.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Indefinite pronouns take the place of nouns that have not been named at all. They refer to non-specific things. Some common indefinite pronouns are *all*, *any*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *few*, *neither*, *none*, *no one*, *one*, *several*, and *something*.

EXAMPLE: **Someone** moved **everything** out of the living room.

ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are words or combinations of words that modify nouns or pronouns. They answer questions such as what kind? how many? which one? or whose?

EXAMPLES: **blue-green** cars, **hard** rock, **young** man (What kind?)

ten apples, **some** people, **many** shirts (How many?)

the smartest student, **that** backpack (Which one?)

Mandy's house, **the baby's** toy (Whose?)

PREPOSITIONS

A preposition begins a phrase that modifies another word in the sentence. Prepositions often describe time or space relationships. They are almost always followed by a noun (the **object of the preposition**).

EXAMPLES: They left **in** the morning. (The phrase *in the morning* modifies the verb *left*.)

Brian stood **outside** the door. (The phrase *outside the door* modifies *stood*.)

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VERBS

Verbs are words that express action or show a state of being. There are three types of verbs.

ACTION VERBS

Action verbs show some kind of activity, either physical or mental.

EXAMPLES: Kathy **lifted** the book and began *to read*.
I **like to think** about when I **flew** to Hawaii.

LINKING VERBS

Linking verbs show a state of being by connecting the subject to a noun, pronoun, or adjective that describes it.

EXAMPLES: That man **was** my boss.
The plant **looked** wilted.

HELPING VERBS

Helping verbs work with other verbs to form a complete verb phrase or to indicate tense.

EXAMPLE: **Will** you *be* going to the party tomorrow? (*Will be* helps *going*.)
I **could have** won the game. (*Could have* helps *won*.)

ADVERBS

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They answer questions such as how? when? where? and to what extent? Often, they can be recognized by an -ly ending.

EXAMPLES: Rob skis **more gracefully** than Peter. (How?)
Take out the trash **now**. (When?)
You ran **upstairs**. (Where?)
Jake plays the guitar **very well**. (To what extent?)

CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are words that join or connect other words, phrases, and clauses within a sentence.

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses that are equally important.

EXAMPLES: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so** (remember FANBOYS)

CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Correlative conjunctions also connect words, phrases, and clauses that are equally important, but these conjunctions are always used in pairs.

EXAMPLES: **Both** Becky **and** Laurissa were busy.
Neither Utah **nor** Wyoming was mentioned.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordinating conjunctions show relationships of time, reason, purpose, or condition between two parts, or clauses, of the sentence.

EXAMPLES: **When** I went to Disneyland, I took a picture of Mickey. (Time relationship)
Kim was upset **because** her boyfriend moved away. (Cause or reason)