

Parts of Speech: Nouns

Description of the Lecture This lecture is about nouns as the first part of speech. Throughout this unit students will become familiar with definition, kinds, uses and formation of nouns. The main emphasis is to show how the way nouns function in a sentence. The unit counts on theory, examples and exercises. Objectives of the Lecture When students have successfully completed this unit, they should be able, among other things, to; 1. Define the term noun as the first part of speech. 2. List the main kinds of nouns. 3. Compose correct, meaningful and functional sentences through nouns.

1. Definition

A noun is a word describing who “subject” or “what “object” in a sentence. A noun is used to name a person, place, or thing. The word “thing” comprises anything which can be perceived by human senses. Remember, that the term “thing” can be anything-an animal, a device, a point, an object, an event, and so on. In addition, nouns represent qualities, feelings, concepts, activities and measures. Nouns are the most basic unit of speech. Examples:

☐ Persons: Stephanie, Dr. Edelstein, teacher, accountant ☐ Places: Chicago, island, Italy, college..... ☐ Things and Objects: novel, surfboard, bicycle, horse..... ☐ Animals: Dog, cat, fish, cow, fox ☐ Substances: Gold, air, iron ☐ Actions: Race, dance, hit, travel ☐ Qualities: patience, honesty, enthusiasm..... ☐ Feelings: happiness, anger, confusion, sadness..... ☐ Concepts: knowledge, freedom, friendship, travel..... ☐ Activities: snowboarding, dancing, management, eating..... ☐ Measures: day, week, inch, kilometer, million..... ☐ Conditions and States: peace, security, joy

grammar Point A noun is the name of a person, place, animal, thing, idea or emotion. In short, it is a naming word.

2. Characteristics of Nouns

All nouns have four characteristics called "properties": (1) gender, (2) person, (3) number, and (4) case. Let us look at these properties one by one.

2. 1. Gender In the English language, noun is "natural," not grammatical. That is, the gender of a noun is determined not by the grammatical form of the word, but by the sex of the person, place, or thing that is named. Gender, in English, denotes male sex, female sex, either sex, or neither sex. ☐ Masculine gender denotes male sex. Examples of masculine nouns are as follows: boy, brother, bull, cock, colt, father, stallion, husband, king, man, son, and uncle. ☐ Feminine gender denotes female sex. Examples of feminine nouns: girl, sister, cow, hen, filly, mother, mare, wife, queen, woman, daughter, and aunt. ☐ Common gender denotes either sex. Examples of common gender nouns: birds, cattle, children, citizens, driver, friend, lawyer, neighbor, parent, relative, singer, and worker. ☐ Neuter gender denotes neither male nor female sex. Examples of neuter gender nouns: books, cabinet, city, desk, house, ink, lamp, pen, river, and tree.

2. 2. Person

"Person" is a characteristic or form which lets us know whether the word relates to the speaker, to the person spoken to, or to the person or thing spoken about. ☐ A first person noun refers to a person who is doing the speaking. Example: "I, John, was on the island of Patmos" (Revelation 1:9). In this sentence, the noun "John" is in the first person because John is the speaker. ☐ A second person noun refers to a person who is being addressed. Example: "Friends, Romans, and countrymen; lend me your ears." In this famous speech from Julius Caesar, the nouns "friends," "Romans," and "countrymen" are in the second person because they name people who are being spoken to. ☐ A third person noun refers to a person, place, or thing being spoken about. Example: "In the beginning, God created the earth and sky." The noun "God" is third person because he is the person being discussed or referred to.

2. 3. Number "Number" is that something in the form of a noun that tells us whether the noun refers to only one person, place, or thing, or to more than one. The singular noun names only one person, place, or thing. The plural noun names more than one person, place, or thing. Consider the following pairs or words: "book versus books", "apple versus apples", "cat versus cats", "dog versus dogs", "roads versus road

Some nouns do not have a plural form. These nouns are called non-countable nouns. Material things like bread, butter, coffee, gold, oxygen, silver, and dust are not usually counted. Instead, they are measured. We do not say, "Give me two breads." We say, "Give me two loaves of bread," or "two slices of bread." Abstract nouns are non-count nouns. Abstract nouns include concepts like freedom and liberty; emotions like love, greed, and hate; fields of study like biology, chemistry, and engineering; qualities like beauty, excellence, and peace. None of these abstract nouns has a plural form.

2. 4. Case "Case" is the relation of a noun or pronoun to other words in the sentence. English nouns have three cases: (a) Nominative, (b) Objective, and (c) Possessive. ☐ The nominative case is the use of a noun (or pronoun) as the subject of a sentence, or as the predicate following a linking verb. ("Nominative" means "pertaining to a name." Example: "The moon is shining." In this sentence, "moon" is the subject nominative. When a noun (or pronoun) is the predicate of the sentence following a linking verb, it is called the "predicate nominative." Example: "God is love." In this sentence, the noun "love" is the predicate nominative. ☐ The objective case is the use of a noun (or pronoun) as an object in a sentence. That is, if a noun (or pronoun) receives the action of a transitive verb, the noun is in the objective case. Example: "I like you." In this sentence, "I" is the subject, "like" is the transitive verb, and "you" is the object that receives the action. A transitive verb is a verb whose action carries over to another person, place, or thing. The person, place, or thing upon which the action has an effect is "the object" of the verb. Example: "John hit Mary." The noun "Mary" is the object of the verb "hit" and is, therefore, in the objective case. ☐ The possessive case is the use of a noun (or pronoun) to show ownership or relationship. A singular possessive noun is formed by adding an apostrophe (') and an "s" to the noun. Examples: boy's hat; girl's bicycle; teacher's book; citizen's rights. A plural noun ending in "s" is formed by adding the apostrophe only. Examples: boys' hats; girls' bicycles; teachers' books; citizens' rights.

3. Kinds of Nouns

3. 1. Proper Nouns

Any formal name or formal title is considered a proper name. The proper noun is the special word “name” that is used for a particular person, place, organization, organism, or thing which is usually unique. Proper nouns are always written in a capital letter at their first letter. From the examples above, “Katia, Larry, Isabel,

Kevin, Animal Planet, Alaska Austin, Texas, Live Music and Capital of the World” are all proper nouns. They are all specific and formal. Examples:

☐ Biden is the president of the United States of America. ☐ France is a democratic country. ☐ John is a good boy.

3. 1. 1. Classification of Proper Nouns

The table below includes the most common categories of proper nouns.

N	Category of Proper Nouns	Examples
1	days of the week	Sunday, Saturday, Friday
2	Months	June, January, February
3	Holidays	Easter, Passover
4	Entities like people, animals, groups, corporations and clubs.	Albert Einstein, The Jackson Five Veteran Writers
5	historical events, periods, documents	Middle Ages (period)
6	Trademarked or Copyrighted Names	Introduction to Psychology
7	special events, calendar events	Mother’s Day, Memorial Day
8	names of people and places	Steven Jones, Kennedy Center
9	names of structures, buildings	Park Mall, Lincoln Memorial
10	names of trains, ships, aircraft, other	Queen Elizabeth, Discovery,
11	modes of transportation	Qatar Airlines
12	names of products and brands	Dial soap, Jeep Cherokee
13	names of officials	Senator Kennedy, President Biden
14	works of art and literature	Tobacco Road, Animal Farms
15	ethnic groups, races, languages, nationalities	Algerian, Italian, Asian, French,
16	cities, states, and governmental units	Algiers capital, Republic of China
17	streets, highways, and roads	Locust Avenue, 80 Boulevard
18	landmarks and geographical locations	Rocky Mountains, International Date
19	public areas and bodies of water	Chippewa Forest, Raccoon River
20	institutions and organizations	Luther College, Rotary Club,
21	Physical or Metaphysical Locations such as regions, celestial identities, and afterlife and spirituals realms	Pacific Ocean The Moon

3. 1. 2. General Capitalization Rules

☐ Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a number, write it as a word. Examples: ☐ This is my best sport. ☐ Five women showed up to volunteer. ☐ Capitalize the pronoun I or any contraction made using I (I’m, I’d, I’ve, I’ll). The professor told me that I needed to take a prerequisite before taking his class. ☐ He thinks that I'd decide to move to Algiers. ☐ I know I'll be ready for this test. ☐ Capitalize proper nouns, but not common nouns. Consider the following pair words between brackets. (John versus uncle), (Ann versus aunt), (NEW York versus city), (Harvard versus university), (Dell versus computer) ☐ Capitalize the first word of a quotation. Examples: ☐ When will you be finished? ☐ My new neighbor said “Good morning,” as I approached the door. ☐ “Good morning!” I answered, somewhat surprised. “You must be Sylvia.” ☐ Do not capitalize the first word of a partial quotation. ☐ He called her “the best problem solver alive.” ☐ “The new edition,” Ari explained, “will be available in two months.”

3. 2. Common Nouns

They are not specific and do not require capitalization. They are used to name general items rather than specific ones. Common nouns are everywhere, and you use them all the time, even if you don’t realize it. Wherever you go, you’ll find at least one common noun. Street, closet,

bathroom, school, mall, gas station, dogs, iceberg, living room; all of these words are things, and thus they are common nouns. They all represent general things or sense. So these nouns refer to any and every person or thing of the same kind or class, not to a particular person or thing: Common here means “shared by all.” It is worth to note that common nouns are further divided into collective, abstract and individual nouns. Examples:

☐ The class is studying grammar. ☐ The nearest town is 40 miles away. ☐ He is a good boy. ☐ Ann is a girl.

The following chart shows how proper and common nouns work in practice.

Common Noun	Proper Noun	girl Katia, Ann, Randa	boy Karim, John, Stephan
		man John, Rover, Jack.....	
		president Donald Trump, Poutin, Abraham Lincoln	city Algiers, Paris, Batna, Setif, Bejaia, New York
		river The Nile, Mississippi, Soumam	

3. 3. Collective Nouns

A collective noun is the name of a number of persons or things taken together and considered as one unit. They are used to name a collection, a group of people, or things of the same kind such as class, team, government, etc. Often, they are followed by a prepositional phrase specifying what they are composed of. It is worth to mention that large subset of collective nouns are specific to certain kinds of animals known as nouns of assembly. Again collective nouns should not be confused with mass nouns. Examples: ☐ The flock of geese spends most of its time in the pasture. ☐ The police dispersed the crowd. ☐ I saw a fleet of ships in the harbor. ☐ A herd of cows ate all the grass. ☐ A team of football players ☐ Barcelona win the match. (The speaker means the individuals (players) of the team and the verb “win” is without (-s)) ☐ Barcelona wins the match. (The speaker means “Barcelona” team as one identity and the verb “win” should be “wins” with (-s))

3. 4. Abstract Nouns

An abstract noun is a noun which names quality, concept, virtue or state, which one cannot perceive through the one’s five physical senses. They are used to refer to things that we cannot see or touch. Example words like love, freedom, courage, democracy, decision, poverty, situation, etc. Examples: ☐ We all love honesty. ☐ Cleanliness is next to godliness. ☐ Courage is the virtue of leaders. ☐ I love to remember the happy days of childhood. ☐ Love is a holy feeling.

3. 4. 1. Special Notes about Abstract Nouns ☐ Concrete nouns are names of material things, i.e. things having a material form, shape or size. Abstract nouns are the names of qualities found in various kinds of persons, places, and objects. Since they have no material form, shape or size, they cannot be seen or touched. We can recognize them only through our mind. We can see sugar but cannot see sweetness, so sugar is a concrete noun and sweetness an abstract noun. In short, concrete nouns refer to physical properties and abstract nouns refer to mental properties. Examples:

Concrete Nouns Abstract Nouns Sugar Book Milk sweetness idea taste

☐ Many abstract nouns are formed by adding suffixes (-ness, -ity, -tion) to adjectives or verbs to make a noun form. Examples are happiness, formality, and gradation. Examples: Adjective Abstract Nouns Kind Gentle Curious Kindness gentleness curiousness

☐ Abstract nouns can also be formed from verbs. Examples: ☐ John knows German very well. ☐ John's knowledge of German helped us while getting around in Austria. In the second sentence, we changed the verb know into the abstract noun knowledge.

3. 5. Material / Concrete Nouns

A material noun is the name of a material, substance, or ingredient things are made of. They can be articles of food or drink as well: iron, copper, steel, gold, coal, silver, rice, wheat, milk, water, tea, sugar. It is worth to note here that concrete nouns are names of material things, i.e. things having a material form, shape or size. Furthermore, a material noun is a type of common noun but a distinction is made between the two. A common noun is usually a countable noun but a material noun is an uncountable noun. Examples: ☐ The cow gives us milk. In this example, cow is a common noun (countable), but milk is a material noun (uncountable). ☐ The brown seeds give coffee. In this example, the word "seeds" is a common noun while coffee is coffee is a material noun.

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Grammar Point If a noun names something that can be detected by the five senses, it is called a concrete noun. Nouns like pen, home, bicycle, brain, shirt, moon, mountain, desk, eyes, book, door, mirror are concrete nouns. On the other hand, if a noun refers to qualities which do not exist in the real world and cannot be felt, tasted, seen, heard or touched, they are categorized as abstract nouns. Examples: hope, democracy, beauty, swiftness, friendship, idea, fiction.....

3. 6. Countable Nouns

A countable noun is an individual object that can, as the name suggest, be counted. If you can have one, two, three, etc. of the noun, it is countable. These nouns can appear in the singular and plural form, and can be used with indefinite articles in the singular form. It is worth to be noted here that generally a noun used in answer to the question how many is a countable noun. Furthermore, common nouns and collective nouns are by and large countable. Examples:

☐ How many sessions did you attend? I attended five sessions. ☐ Table = it is a countable noun since we can say one table, two tables ☐ A letter, letters, a book, books

3. 7. Uncountable Nouns or a Non-count or Mass Noun

A non-countable noun refers to things that are not individual and therefore cannot be counted in their normal sense because they exist in a "mass" form. Furthermore, these nouns stand for substances that cannot be counted but can only be measured. Therefore, they cannot be made into the plural form, and in their normal meaning, they cannot be preceded by the indefinite article. The nouns of this kind normally take a singular verb. It is worth to note here that a noun used in answer to the question "how much" is an uncountable noun. These nouns include:

☐ Abstract ideas: news, information advice, fun, weather, beauty ☐ Concrete nouns: water, hair, money ☐ Feelings: love, happiness, anger, joy, ☐ Human attributes: honesty, peace, permission, patience, courage, ☐ Blocks of things: food, butter, water, bread, sand,

3. 7. 1. Countable and Uncountable Nouns Differences

Certain nouns can be countable in one meaning, and uncountable in another, it depends to their use in the sentence. Students should always remember and relate the

word to its context. When we want to refer to the quantity of the uncountable items we use values of measurement which are countable. An uncountable noun is frequently made into countable by adding such phrases as a piece of, a cup of, a grain of, a game of, a bolt of, a flash of, a clap of, or five kilos of.

Uncountable Nouns Countable Nouns ☐ A jar of coffee ☐ The bread ☐ The news ☐ The milk of the cow ☐ tea ☐ Three coffees, please ☐ A loaf of bread ☐ A piece of news ☐ Five liters of milk ☐ A cup of tea

3. 8. Appositive Nouns

Appositives “as non-restrictive modifiers”, add information that is not essential for the identification of the referent of the phrase so modified. When one noun follows another to describe it, the noun which follows is said to be in ‘apposition’ to the noun which comes before it. So they are noun or noun phrase that identifies a nearby noun or pronoun. Appositives begin with a noun or an article, as a phrases they do not have their own subject and verb, and they are usually blocked off in writing by comma but occasionally are separated with a colon (:) or dash (—).In speech, they are surrounded by perceptible pause and often a fall in voice pitch, akin to the aside spoken by a stage actor. Appositives are almost always treated as parenthetical asides elements after their head noun. Examples:

☐ The President of France, who is in his 7th year in office, has only one more year to serve. In cases like this, the writer assumes that the reader will know who the President of the US is and so does not need the appositive information to identify him. Nonetheless, the writer adds the information that the President is in his 7th year in office as a sort of secondary predicate in addition to the primary one, namely, that he has only one more year to serve. ☐ My son Bill is happy. ☐ My husband John is very busy by now. ☐ The bicycle, an antique stingray, cost twenty thousand dollars. ☐ Stephan, our captain, made twenty runs. ☐ John, my uncle, is a very humorous person. ☐ Stephan's ambition, to become a champion in football, is within his capacity. ☐ Ann, his wife of forty years old, suddenly decided to open her own office.

4. Gender of Nouns Since the middle ages, English nouns have natural gender, reflecting on the sex of the individual: ☐ Males have masculine gender: actor, man, boy, aviator, bull, rooster. ☐ Females have feminine gender: actress, woman, girl, aviatrix, cow, hen ☐ Sexless objects have neuter gender: tree, box, book, floor, chair ☐ Common nouns denotes both male and female. See the table below.

Masculine	Feminine	Sexless /Neuter	Common	Boy	Man	Brother	Uncle	Bull	Girl	Woman	Sister	Aunt
Cow	Gold	Teacher	Doctor	Child	Diplomat	Student	Rice	Flower	River	Table		

4. 1. Masculine and Feminine Formation ☐ The feminine of nouns is formed in two ways: the first way is by adding “ess” to the masculine noun or form. Furthermore, professional activities are often

referred to in the common gender. The feminine forms authoress, poetess, and directress are no longer in use. Examples: