Parts of Speech Overview

CONTENTS: _Click on a heading below to jump directly to that topic._

PARTS OF SPEECH ...........................................................................................................................................1
NOUNS ..............................................................................................................................................................2
PRONOUNS ..........................................................................................................................................................3
ADJECTIVES ..........................................................................................................................................................4
VERBS .................................................................................................................................................................5
ADVERBS .............................................................................................................................................................7
AVOID DOUBLE NEGATIVES ............................................................................................................................10
PREPOSITIONS .....................................................................................................................................................10
CONJUNCTIONS ....................................................................................................................................................11
INTERJECTIONS ....................................................................................................................................................12
IMPERATIVES .......................................................................................................................................................12

PARTS OF SPEECH
Words are grouped into eight classes or parts of speech, according to their function, place, meaning, and use in a sentence. The parts of speech are:

- Nouns
- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Prepositions
- Conjunctions
- Interjection

FORM VS. FUNCTION
Many words are not confined to one part of speech, but may function in several capacities. Consider the word “light” in the following contexts:

- As you **light** the candle, say a prayer. (verb)
- The **light** glowed at the end of the pier. (noun)
- Use a **light** touch when you pet the frightened cat. (adjective)
- When packing for a long trip, be sure to pack **light** to save space. (adverb)
NOUNS
A noun names a person, place, thing, or idea.

Example: Repetition does not transform a lie into truth.

Nouns:
- Often appear with an article (a spoon, an apple, the newspaper).
- Can usually be made plural (one kitten, two kittens).
- Can usually be made possessive (the kitten’s paw).
- Can be a subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, object complement, or object of a preposition.

PROPER NOUNS AND COMMON NOUNS
Proper nouns are the names of specific persons, places, and things. All other nouns are common nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper Nouns</th>
<th>Common Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book of Jeremiah</td>
<td>a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father John</td>
<td>a priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Superior</td>
<td>a lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of Independence</td>
<td>a treaty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COLLECTIVE NOUNS
A collective noun stands for a group of people, animals, or things.

- Collective nouns can work with either singular or plural verbs, or pronouns, without changing their form.
- If a collective is a single unit, it takes a singular verb or singular pronoun to refer to it.
- If the individuals are working separately, the noun takes plural verbs or pronouns.

Examples: The jury agreed on its verdict. (The jury is acting as a single unit, so the noun needs a singular verb.)

The jury were arguing about their views. (Individuals on the jury are arguing, so the noun is treated as plural.)
Common Collective Nouns

- audience
- class
- crew
- committee
- Congress
- faculty
- family
- flock
- group
- herd
- jury
- herd
- mob
- team
- troop
- U.S. Senate
- jury
- U.S. Senate

POSSESSIVE NOUNS

Possessive nouns are noun forms that show ownership, possession, or similar relationships. To show possession:

- Add an apostrophe before the last “s” if the word is singular.
- Add an apostrophe after the “s” if the word is plural.

Examples:
Incorrect: The boys foot hurt after he took a long hike.
Correct: The boy's foot hurt after he took a long hike.
Correct: The boys' feet hurt after they took a long hike.

PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. The pronoun usually substitutes for a specific noun, known as its antecedent ("the words before").

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number (she or they), in person (I, you, him), and in gender (he, she, it).

COMMON PRONOUNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of a sentence (Nominative)</th>
<th>Object of a verb (Objective)</th>
<th>Ownership of the antecedent (Possessive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my, mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your, yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>your, yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TYPES OF PRONOUNS

- Demonstrative: Refers to things (this, that, these, those)
- Intensive: Ends in self, selves (myself, itself, herself, himself, yourself)
Parts of Speech Overview

- Indefinite: Indefinite reference to nouns (each, one, all, anybody, some, everyone)
- Interrogative: Used in questions (who, which, what, whose, whom)
- Personal: Refers to people or things (I, you, he, she, it, we, they)
- Possessive: Does not take an apostrophe (its, her, theirs)
- Reciprocal: Refers back to individual parts of plural terms (each other, one another)
- Reflexive: Intensifies nouns they refer back to (yourselves, themselves)
- Relative: Relates dependent clause to a noun (who, which, that, what, whom)

ADJECTIVES
An adjective is a modifier that describes nouns and pronouns. It may appear before or after the word it modifies. An adjective usually answers one of these questions: Which one? What kind of? How many?

Examples: The tame elephant. (Which elephant?)
Her rare, valuable, old stamps. (What kind of stamps?)
These sixteen candles. (How many candles?)

TYPES OF ADJECTIVES
- Descriptive (gray sky, beautiful garden)
- Proper (Buddhist, Italian)
- Limiting or possessive—these adjectives do not describe qualities, but instead identify or specify the words they modify (this sky, my garden, its name)

Note: Adjectives do not change form based on number: new student (singular); new students (plural).

ADJECTIVE FORMS
Adjectives (and adverbs) appear in three forms: positive, comparative, and superlative. The positive, or simple, form is the form most common in speech and writing. Use the comparative and superlative forms to make comparisons:

Positive | Comparative | Superlative
---|---|---
hungry | hungrier | hungriest
Parts of Speech Overview

small    smaller    smallest

good     better     best

VERBS
A verb is a word that indicates action or existence, expressing what a subject does or is.

FORMS OF A VERB

Person  First person: I walk.
        Second person: You walk.
        Third person: He/She/It walks.

Number   Singular: It walks.
         Plural: They walk.

Tense    Past: I walked outside.
         Present: I walk outside.
         Future: I will walk outside.

Voice    Active voice: The fans watched the game.
         Passive voice: The game was watched by the fans.

Mood     Imperative: Listen!
         Indicative: You are listening.
         Subjunctive: I wish you would listen.

PRIMARY VERB FORMS
All English verbs, with the exception of be, have five primary forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form</th>
<th>Present Tense</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>look</td>
<td>looks</td>
<td>looking</td>
<td>looked</td>
<td>looked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>walks</td>
<td>walking</td>
<td>walked</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watch</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>watching</td>
<td>watched</td>
<td>watched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The **base form** is used for the present tense when the subject of the verb is **I, you, we, they**, or a plural noun.
   
   **Example:** I **talk** and you **listen**.

2. The **present tense** indicates action in the present when the subject is third-person singular (**he, she, it**) or a **singular noun**.
   
   **Example:** He **walks** while she **talks**.
3. The **present participle** indicates continuing action, created by adding **-ing** to the base form of the verb. In order to function as the main verb in a sentence, a participle must be accompanied by a form of the verb **be**.

   **Example:** Mary is looking for a large apartment.

A **gerund** is a present participle functioning as the subject or object in a sentence.

   **Examples:** Swimming is good exercise. (*Swimming* is the subject.)
   Jonathan liked fishing. (*fishing* is the direct object of *liked.*)

   A present participle can also be an adjective.

   **Example:** He gave supporting evidence. (**supporting** modifies **evidence**.)

4. The **past tense** indicates action that occurred in the past. A verb's past tense can often be recognized by its **-d** or **-ed** ending. The past tense does not change form to show person or number.

   **Examples:** [His parents] or [Richard] agreed with her.
   [His parents] or [Richard] traveled to Paris and saw the Eiffel Tower.

5. The **past participle** is identical to the past tense form of the verb (except in some irregular verbs). Like the present participle, the past participle must be accompanied by a form of the verb **be** to function as the main verb in the sentence. It does not change form to indicate person or number.

   The past participle can also function as an adjective.

   **Examples:** Nearly everyone was helped at the scene. (**was helped** is a passive voice verb)
   I never eat an overcooked steak. (**overcooked** is an adjective)

**IRREGULAR VERBS**

Verbs that form their past tense in other ways than adding a **-d** or **-ed** at the end are called **irregular** verbs.

   **Examples:** I see the birds. (**perfect tense**)
   I saw the birds. (**past tense**)
AUXILIARY VERB FORMS
Some verbs do not make sense without an auxiliary verb (or a helping verb). The most common auxiliary verbs are be, have, do.

Forms of be, have, do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form</th>
<th>Present Tense</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>I am</td>
<td>being</td>
<td>I/he/she/it was</td>
<td>been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he/she/it is</td>
<td></td>
<td>we/you/they were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we/you/they are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>I have</td>
<td>having</td>
<td>I have</td>
<td>had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he/she/it has</td>
<td></td>
<td>he/she/it had</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we/you/they have</td>
<td></td>
<td>we/you/they had</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>I do</td>
<td>doing</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he/she/it does</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we/you/they do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LINKING VERBS
A linking verb joins the subject of a sentence to a sentence complement, which describes or renames the subject. Linking verbs usually describe states of being, not actions.

Examples: Alex Gordon was a baseball player for the Kansas City Royals.
Salvador Perez remained confident that the Royals would succeed.

Linking verbs include all forms of the verb be: am, is, was, are, were, be, being, been.

ADVERBS
An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs add to action verbs; they show how, when, where or why actions are done. Adverbs often end in -ly.

Examples: The pastry chef carefully spread raspberry frosting over the cake. (The adverb carefully describes the verb spread.)
That lamp shines very brightly. (The adverb very describes the adverb brightly.)

Note: Be careful to use an adverb—not an adjective—after an action verb.
Parts of Speech Overview

Examples:  
Incorrect: The boss sneezed loud at his desk. (Loud is an adjective)  
Correct: The boss sneezed loudly at his desk.
Incorrect: Speak slow during your lecture. (Slow is an adjective)  
Correct: Speak slowly during your lecture.

PLACEMENT OF ADVERBS
Adverbs modifying verbs can appear in various positions: at the beginning or end of the sentence, before or after the verb, or between a helping verb and its main verb.

Examples:  
Slowly, we drove along the rain-slick road  
Mary handled the china dish very carefully.
Martin always wins our tennis matches.

An adverb cannot appear after the verb, because the verb is followed by the direct object.

Incorrect  
Mother wrapped carefully the gift.

Correct  
Mother wrapped the gift carefully.
Mother carefully wrapped the gift.
Carefully, Mother wrapped the gift.

WORDS INTRODUCING ADVERBIAL CLAUSES
Words that introduce adverbial clauses are subordinating conjunctions:

Common Subordinating Conjunctions  
after although as as if because before if  
rather since so that that than though unless  
until when whether where while

ADVERBIAL WORD GROUPS

Examples:  
Do not judge a book by its cover. (Do not judge a book how? By its cover.)
Parts of Speech Overview

Tyranny will **in time** lead to revolution. (Tyranny will lead to revolution **when**? In time.)

**To the ant** a few drops of rain are a flood. (A few drops of rain are a flood **under what conditions**? To an ant.)

**USING IRREGULAR COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS OF ADVERBS**
Some adverbs (and adjectives) change form to indicate their comparative and superlative degrees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples:</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>badly</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ill</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADVERB CLAUSES**
Adverb clauses modify verbs and may appear nearly anywhere in a sentence. They tell **when, where, why, under what conditions, or to what degree.**

Examples: **When the well is dry,** we know the value of water.

Venice would be a fine city if the canals were only drained.

Unlike adjective clauses, the adverb clause can move within the sentence without affecting the meaning of the sentence:

**Examples:** We know the value of water when the well is dry.

If the canals were only drained, Venice would be a fine city.

**USING GOOD/WELL AND BAD/BADLY**
Don't confuse the adjective **good** with the adverb **well,** or the adjective **bad** with the adverb **badly.**

Use the adjectives **good** and **bad** to modify nouns or pronouns:

**Examples:** a good time; a bad play.

Use the adverbs **well** and **badly** to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs:

**Examples:** she sings well; he hears badly.
AVOID DOUBLE NEGATIVES
A double negative is a nonstandard form that uses two negatives when only one is necessary, i.e. “I don’t have no money.”

The adverbs barely, scarcely, and hardly and the preposition but (meaning except) are negative and should not be used with other negatives.

Examples: Faulty: We couldn’t hardly see the band. Their music didn’t never reach the back rows of the stadium.
            Revised: We could hardly see the band. Their music never reached the back rows of the stadium.
            Revised: Their songs would never have been heard in the back rows of the stadium.

PREPOSITIONS
A preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase that modifies another word in a sentence.

Examples: in the house, to the store, over the hill.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

COMMON PREPOSITIONS

about   but    into    over    toward
above   by      inside   past    under
after   concerning like   plus    underneath
among   considering near   regarding unlike
at      despite   next    respecting until
before  down    off      round   unto
behind  during   on       since   up
below   except   onto     than    upon
beside  for      opposite through with
between from    out      throughout without
beyond  in       outside  to

Last edited 03/29/2021 DRR
MULTIPLE-WORD PREPOSITIONS
according to away from in back of in spite of together with
ahead of because of in case of on top of
along with except for in front of other than
apart from in addition to inside of out of

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES
Prepositional phrases may contain two or more nouns or pronouns, plus a conjunction. Nouns at the end of prepositional phrases can never function as the subject of a sentence:

Example: One of the boys wants pizza. (Boys is not the subject because it is the object of the preposition of. Therefore, the subject is One.)

CONJUNCTIONS
COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS
A coordinating conjunction is a small word that connects independent clauses to create a compound sentence. To decide whether a word can function as a coordinating conjunction, try using it to join two short sentences:

Examples: She studies English constantly. She knows it better every day.
She studies English constantly, and she knows it better every day.
I went to the store. I couldn’t find what I wanted.
I went to the store, but I couldn’t find what I wanted.

Common Coordinating Conjunctions
for nor or so
and but yet

Tip: Use the acronym FANBOYS to remember the coordinating conjunctions.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS
Subordinating conjunctions join one subject-verb combination to another subject-verb combination, making one part subordinate to or dependent upon the other—called a subordinate or dependent clause.
Common Subordinating Conjunctions

after as soon as for in order that than when
although because how provided that that whenever
as before if since unless wherever
as if even if in case that so that until while

Note: When they are not linking sentences, some of these words can function as prepositions.

CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Correlative conjunctions are paired words that join equal words, phrases, or clauses. One conjunction comes before one part and the second conjunction come before the other part.

Common Correlative Conjunctions
Not only...but also Either...or
Both...and Neither...nor

INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are words or small groups of words that are used before exclamation points to express strong feeling of any kind.

Example: Wow! Hooray! Way to go!

An interjection should be written separately from the main sentence.

Examples: Congratulations! You've just won the lottery!

Overuse diminishes the value of the exclamation point, so use it sparingly. A comma or period is often better after mildly exclamatory expressions.

Example: He said maybe.

IMPERATIVES

An imperative is a request or command. Either a period or an exclamation point could be appropriate, depending on the context.

Examples: Refuse the offer.
Refuse the offer!