

Parts of speech: A review for material science students

There are nine parts of speech. There are articles, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections.

01 Nouns

A noun is a word used to name something: a person/animal, a place, a thing, or an idea. For example, all of the following are nouns. Ahmed, Amina Japan, Venezuela, Atlanta, pencil, store, air, biology, theory of Relativity, Pythagorean theory

Hint: They are sometimes preceded by noun markers. Noun markers are also called determiners and quantifiers. They are words like *a, an, the, this, that, these, those, each, some, any, every, no, numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.), several, many, a lot, few, possessive pronouns (his, her, etc).*

Nouns are classified in several ways...

1. Nouns can be singular or plural.

Singular nouns name only one person, place, thing or idea. *One apple, a pencil, the book*

Plural nouns name two or more persons, places, things or ideas. Most singular nouns (Not ALL) are made plural by adding -s. For example, (*pencil* is a singular noun. The word *pencils* are a plural noun.)

Exception #1: If a noun ends with the -s, sh, ch, or x like the words, *kiss, church, ash or box*, then they are made plural by adding -es (*kisses, churches, ashes, and boxes*).

Exception #2: There are also irregular nouns that do not follow any rules. For example, the plural form of the word *child* is *children*.

2. Nouns can be Proper Nouns or Common Nouns

a) **Proper nouns** refer to specific people, places, things and ideas. A person's name (*brahim*) is a proper noun, for example. Other examples are names of places (*Atlanta, Georgia*) and names of things (*the Navy*). They are always capitalized!

- People's names and titles- *King Henry, Mrs. Smith*
- Names for deity, religions, religious followers, and sacred books- *God, Allah, Buddha, Islam, Catholicism, Christians*
- Races, nationalities, tribes, and languages- *African American, Polish-American, Black, Chinese, Russian*
- Specific Places like countries, cities, bodies of water, streets, buildings, and parks
- Specific organizations- *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),*
- Days of the week, months, and holidays,
- Brand names of products
- Historical periods, well-known events, and documents- *Middle ages, Magna Carta*
- Titles of publications and written documents

b) **Common nouns** are all other nouns. For example: *cat, pencil, paper, etc.* They are not capitalized unless they are the first word in the sentence.

3. Nouns can also be collective.

Collective nouns are nouns that are grammatically considered singular, but include more than one person, place, thing, or idea in its meaning. Words like *team, group, jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, team, couple, band, herd, quartet, and society*. Generally, collective nouns are treated as singular because they emphasize the group as one unit. *The committee is going to make a decision.*

4. Nouns can also be either count or non-count.

Nouns that are non-count cannot be counted. For example, you cannot go outside to have two fresh airs. One goes outside for fresh air.

5. **Nouns can be Abstract or concrete** : A noun can be abstract or concrete.

- Concrete nouns are nouns that you can touch. They are people, places, and some things. Words like *person, court, Georgia, pencil, hand, paper, car, and door* are all examples of concrete nouns.
- Abstract nouns are nouns that cannot be physically held. For example, things like air, justice, safety, Democracy, faith, religion, etc.

verb → continuous

6. **Nouns can be Gerunds** A gerund is the -ing form of the verb and is used as a noun. For example, Running is good for you. Running is the noun/gerund and. is is the verb.
My crying upset him. Crying is the subject and upset is the verb

Note: A noun can fit into more than one of these categories. For example, the noun *Angela* is a singular, concrete, count, proper noun.

02Pronouns A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. They eliminate the need for repetition.

For Example: Instead of Amina talked to Amina's child, you might say amina talked to her child. Her is the pronoun. It renames the antecedent, amina.

There are several types of pronouns.

1. **Personal Pronouns refer to specific persons or things. Personal pronouns can act as subjects, objects, or possessives**

Singular: I, me, you, she, her, he, him, it:
Plural: we, us, you, they, them

I, you, she, he, it, we, they are used as subjects of sentences.

For example, she knew the grammar rules very well.

The personal pronouns that can be used as **objects** are: Me, you, him, her, it, them

For Example:

The teacher gave all of them good grades. Ahmed gave his poetry book to her. Then, Amina gave it to me.

Them, her and me are personal pronouns used as objects. They are NOT the subjects of the sentences.

2. **Possessive Pronouns** indicate ownership or possession.

Singular: my, mine, your, yours, hers, his, its

For Example: She returned my pencil to me because it was mine.

3. **Reflexive Pronouns** name a receiver of an action who is identical to the doer of the action.

Singular: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself **Plural:** ourselves, yourselves, themselves

For example: Amina congratulated herself on her good grades.

Here, Mamela is both the doer and the receiver of the action.

Q: So, who did Mamela congratulate? A: Herself.

Intensive Pronouns emphasize a noun or another pronoun.

For Example: I saw the boss himself at the mall. Here, *himself* emphasizes the antecedent, the boss.

Reciprocal Pronouns express shared actions or feelings.

Each other One another

For Example: Ahmed and Amina help each other in their homework.

Ahmed and his friend help one another when they go shopping.

Indefinite Pronouns refer to non-specific persons and things.

All, another, any, anybody, anyone, anything, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, nothing, one, several, some, somebody, someone, something

For Example:

The underlined indefinite pronouns do not refer to any one person. They are referring to people in general.

Demonstrative Pronouns are also considered noun markers. They "point" towards nouns.

this, that, these, those, which

For Example:

That woman attends Gainesville College. *That* points out which woman.

The woman attends Gainesville College. Q: Which woman? A: That woman.

Interrogative Pronouns introduce questions.

Who, Whom, Whose, Which, What

For Example:

Who is going on vacation? To whom will the teacher give an "A"? What are you doing?

Relative Pronouns introduce dependent clauses and refers to a person or thing already mentioned in the sentence (i.e. the antecedent).

Who, whoever, whom, whomever, whose, which, that

For Example:

The English that we learn in class will help us pass TOEFL.

that we learn in class is the adjective clause that describes English. And, that is the relative pronoun.

Q: Which English?

A: The English that we learn in class—as opposed to the English we learn around our friends.

03Adjectives An adjective modifies (describes) a noun or pronoun. Normally in English, the adjective comes before the noun.

For example: The smart student earned an "A". They also come after linking verbs.

For example: I feel happy.

Adjectives can be used to make comparisons.

- For most adjectives of one or two syllables, you can add –er. For example, greater, faster, stronger.
- For adjectives longer than two syllables, you should use the word *more*.

For example, He was more intelligent than his sister was.

Adjectives can also be used as superlatives.

- This is usually done by adding –est to the end of an adjective that is one or two syllables. For example, the loudest, the coolest, the smartest.
- If an adjective is three syllables or longer, you must use the words *the most*. For example, he is the most likeable person in the world!

WARNING- Never use both an –er ending and the word *more* or an –est ending and the word *most*.

For example, I am the ~~most~~ happiest when my students learn. Instead, it should be: I am the happiest when my students learn.

There are some irregular adjective and adverb forms. For example:

Adjective	Adverb	Comparing two	Comparing three or more
Bad	Badly	Worse	Worst
Good	Well	Better	Best
Little		Less	Least
Much	Many	More	Most

Punctuation Note: Adjectives are not usually capitalized unless they are the first word in a sentence. **BUT**, nationalities are also adjectives and should be capitalized.

For example: Ricky Martin is Puerto Rican and Michelle Yeoh is Chinese.

These are called proper adjectives. And, like proper nouns, **proper adjectives** are always capitalized in English. They are derived from proper nouns and are words like: *African-American, Vietnamese, Latino, Italian, Japanese, Korean, etc*. They can also include adjectives like *Catholic, Jewish, Republican, Democrat*,

When they are used together, they are arranged in a certain order.

Determine r*	Opinion	Size	Age	Color	Origin	Materia l	Noun
<i>The, This</i>	<i>Pretty</i>	<i>Big</i>	<i>New</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Puerto Rican</i>	<i>Leather</i>	<i>Sofa</i>
<i>Some</i>	<i>Tall</i>	<i>Thin</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Purple</i>	<i>Rican</i>	<i>Wood</i>	
<i>My</i>	<i>Expensive</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Ancient</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Silk</i>	<i>Scarf</i>

For Example:

I saw that tall, thin, old, blue silk scarf at the store and I bought it.

Ahmed drives an expensive old Italian car.

04 Verbs: Verbs generally express action or a state of being. There are several classifications for verbs- action verbs, linking verbs, main verbs/auxiliary verbs, transitive/intransitive and phrasal verbs.

1. **Action verbs** show action. **He runs. He plays. They study.**

2. **Linking Verbs** link the subject to an adjective. **Ahmed is beautiful.**

The linking verb *is* links the adjective *beautiful* with the subject *Ahmed*.

1. **Main verbs** can stand alone.

2. **Auxiliary verbs**, also called helping verbs, serve as support to the main verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are:

Have, has, had Do, does, did Be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been Should, could, will, would, might, can, may, must, shall, ought (to)
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For example: Ahmed *has run* everyday. **Run is an action verb. The subject can actually “do” it.**

Has is the helping verb. It helps the main verb *run* to be present perfect tense.

Verbs can be transitive or intransitive.

1. **Transitive Verbs** require a direct object in order to make sense.

For Example: Ahmed *takes aspirin* for her headaches. **Here, *takes* is a transitive verb since the sentence Ahmed *takes* has no meaning without its direct object *aspirin*.**

2. **Intransitive Verbs do not need direct objects to make them meaningful.**

For Example: *Amina swims*. The verb *swim* has meaning for the reader without an object.

Caution: A verb can

be either transitive or intransitive depending on its context. **For Example:**

The cars race. – Here, *race* is intransitive. It does not need an object.

My father races horses. – Here, *races* is transitive. It requires the object *horses* in order to make sense.

Verbs can be phrasal.

1. Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and a preposition. The preposition gives the verb a different meaning than it would have by itself. For example, the verb *look* has a different meaning from the phrasal verb *look up* (in the dictionary). Some more examples:

call up, find out, hand in, make up, put off, turn on, write up

05 Adverbs: An adverb is a word that modifies an action verb, an adjective or another adverb.

The teacher *carefully* graded the homework. *Carefully* is an adverb that modifies the action verb *to grade*. Ahmed was *extremely* enthusiastic about doing his homework. *Extremely* is an adverb that modifies the adjective *enthusiastic*.

Amina ran out of the classroom *very* quickly. *Very* is an adverb that modifies the adverb *quickly*.

Warning: You need an adjective after linking verbs... **NEVER** an adverb! For example, *Ahmed feels bad (guilty) when he has to leave class*. Here, *bad* is an adjective that modifies the proper noun *Ahmed*. It is an adjective because it follows the linking verb *to feel*. **HOWEVER**, verbs like *look, sound, smell, feel, and taste* can function as either an action verb or a linking verb.

Ahmed feels badly (to the touch) after swimming in a chlorinated pool. His skin is really dry.

Here, *bad* is used in its adverbial form since it follows an action verb, *to feel*.

Types of Adverbs:

1. **Relative Adverbs** introduce questions and dependent adverbial clauses. They answer the questions *When?* and *Where?* They are:

When	Where
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For Example:

When I was young, I liked to play outside. Q: When did I like to play outside? A: When I was young.

2. **Adverbs of Frequency** indicate answer the question *how often?* They are:

Always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never
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The students in SM *always* study very hard.

They *rarely* forget to do their homework.

06 Conjunctions: are the scotch tape of the grammatical world. They join together words and phrases. There are three kinds of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions.

1. Coordinating Conjunctions

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English. You can use the mnemonic device *fanboys* to remember them. **F**or **A**nd **N**or **B**ut **O**r **Y**et **S**o

They can be used with commas to create compound sentences. **For example:**

Ahmed loves to dance, *but* Amina has no rhythm.

Ahmed works hard, *yet* he still earns low grades.

2. **Correlative Conjunctions** also join ideas, but they work in pairs. They are:

Both...and neither...nor whether...or either...or not only...but also

For Example:

***Not only* am I happy about the grades, *but* I am also excited that you are learning!**

3. **Subordinating Conjunctions** join an independent clause to a subordinate clause. That is, they join a clause that can stand alone with a clause that cannot stand alone. Some frequently used subordinating conjunctions are:

after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, while.

For Example: ***Although* the students were tired, they still came to class.**

07 Prepositions: Prepositions are words that, like conjunctions, connect a noun or pronoun to another word in a sentence. Some common prepositions:

About	Before	Down	Into	Through
<u>Above</u>	Behind	During	Like	<u>To</u>
Across	Below	Except	Of	Toward
After	Beneath	For	Off	Under
Among	Beside	From	On	Up
Around	Between	In	Over	With
At	By	Instead of	Since	Without

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. They can act as adjectives or as adverbs.

Ahmed, the student from Algeria, wrote an excellent paper on the computer

08 Interjections: Interjections are words used to express emotional states. They can usually be found in narrative writing, interviews, and in spoken English. They can stand alone.

For example: Oh!, wow!, Ouch! Oops! Hey!

Punctuation Note: They are punctuated with either commas or exclamation marks. Mild interjections are followed by a comma, but stronger interjections are punctuated with an exclamation mark (!).

Oh, we're late for the movie. Generally, the movies is not an important destination. Therefore, the person making this statement will sound less urgent than the next example.

Oh! I'm late for work. Work, unlike the movies, is generally considered a very important destination. If one doesn't arrive on time, there is the possibility of being fired or of losing face. Here, the speaker will have a greater sense of urgency.

Generally, you do not find interjections in academic writing.

09 Articles.

Q: What do articles do in a sentence?

A: Articles signal that a noun is going to follow.

Example:

Who invented **the** telephone? **The** wheel? **The** refrigerator? **The** airplane?

a / an / The / the

A cat was chasing a mouse in my back yard.

Modifiers (adjectives & adverbs) can appear between an article and a noun.

Examples: A sunset. A spectacular sunset. An exceptionally spectacular sunset.

The indefinite article ‘a’ can only appear before nouns that begin with a consonant sound: a hand, a book, a world, a computer...

The indefinite article ‘an’ can only appear before nouns that begin with a vowel sound: an apartment, an hour, an article...

General Rules for the Use of Articles:

I. Use a/an with singular count nouns whose specific identity is *not* known to the reader either because it is being mentioned for the *first* time, or because its specific identity is *unknown* even to the writer.

Examples: Julia arrived in a limousine. (a = one among many. Not a specific one.)

We’re looking for an apartment. (an = any one.)

II. Do *not* use a/an with non-count nouns. Only use a/an with non-count nouns if you add a count noun in front of the non-count noun.

Example:

☒ Amina asked her mother for an advice.

☒ Amina asked her mother for a piece of advice.

III. Use the with most nouns whose specific identity is *known* to the reader because:

1. the noun has been previously mentioned:

Yesterday I saw a group of ESL students. The students were playing with a ball. The ball was white and blue. The ball rolled into a hole. The hole was small.

2. The noun is made specific by a superlative: I bought the fastest computer they had.

3. the noun describes a unique person, place, or thing:

Please give this to the manager. The sun is bright today. Rain is falling heavily in the North.

4. the context or situation makes the noun’s identity clear:

Please don’t slam the door when you leave. Bob warned me that the dog playing in his yard is very affectionate and jumps on every person it meets.

IV. Do *not* use the with plural or non-count nouns meaning “all” or “in general” (i.e. generic reference nouns). Do *not* use the with most singular proper nouns.

☒ The fountains are an expensive element of landscape design.

☒ In some parts of the world, the rice is preferred to all other grains.

V. Do *not* use articles with other noun markers or determiners, i.e. possessive nouns (Helen’s) ; and some pronouns (his, her, its, ours, their, whose, this, that, these, those, all, any, each, either, every, few, many, more, most, much, neither, several, some).

Exceptions: All the...A few...The most...

Examples:

☒ The Helen’s book is on the floor.

☒ A book belongs to Ahmed.

A final caution- A word can be more than one part of speech.

For example: I sat on the sofa. Above, sofa is used as a noun (object of the preposition).

I slept on the sofa bed.

But, here sofa is used as an adjective to modify the noun bed.

The following sentence illustrates all eight parts of speech.

