

# Parts of Speech

Words are categorized by the jobs they perform. The term “**part of speech**” is used to explain the particular function or category of words and how they work together to make a sentence.

## Noun

**Nouns** represent “who” or “what.” They are most often explained as being a “person,” “place,” or “thing.”

There are *proper nouns* that name a **specific person, place, or thing; proper nouns are capitalized**. The remaining nouns are called *common nouns* and are not capitalized. “John”, “Pennsylvania”, “ballpark”, and “apple” are all examples of nouns.

**Helpful Hint!** If preceded by an article (a, an, or the), the word is a noun. It is important to know that this is not always though.

**Pronouns** take the place of a noun. There are several categories of pronouns:

- |                                        |                                        |                                     |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrative | <input type="checkbox"/> interrogative | <input type="checkbox"/> reciprocal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> indefinite    | <input type="checkbox"/> personal      | <input type="checkbox"/> reflexive  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> intensive     | <input type="checkbox"/> possessive    | <input type="checkbox"/> relative   |

Some examples of pronouns: “I”, “you”, “she”, “they”, “them”, “my”, “mine”, “ours”, “yours”, “theirs”, “that”, “herself”, and “whose.” See the pronoun handout for more information.

## Verbs and Adverbs

**Verbs** show the action or state of being of a noun. There are *main verbs*, *helping verbs*, and *linking verbs*.

- ◆ **Main Verb**- agrees with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and in number (singular or plural).
- ◆ **Helping Verb**- always goes in front of the main verb. Helping verbs are forms of “do”, “have” or “be” (all of which can also act as main verbs). Helping verbs may also be one of nine modals: “can”, “could”, “may”, “might”, “must”, “shall”, “should”, “will”, or “would.”
- ◆ **Linking Verb**- links the subject to a word (or word group) that renames or describes the subject (“Sam is a musician.” or “The trees *look* damaged.”). The common linking verbs are forms of “to be”: “am”, “are”, “be”, “being”, “been”, “is”, “was”, and “were.” The following words may also be linking verbs: “appear”, “become”, “feel”, “grow”, “look”, “make”, “seem”, “smell”, “sound”, and “taste.”

**Helpful Hint!** The suffixes **-ize**, **-ify**, and **-en** usually indicate verbs.

**Adverbs** modify or describe a verb, adjective or other adverbs. They express “how”, “when”, “where”, “why” or “to what degree.”

Some examples of adverbs are “carefully”, “first”, “there”, and “very”. **Adverbs often end in “-ly.”**

## Adjective

**Adjectives** modify or describe nouns or pronouns. They tell “which one”, “what kind” or “how many.”

Some examples of adjectives are “third”, “blue”, and “beautiful.”

**Helpful Hint!** The suffixes **–ful**, **-ish**, **-like**, **-al**, **-y**, and **–ate** usually indicate adjectives.

## Preposition

**Prepositions** precede a noun or pronoun to indicate the noun’s relationship to another word in the sentence in relation to place or time.

Some examples of prepositions are “at”, “in”, “to”, “by”, “after”, “before”, “between”, “from”, “into”, “near”, “over”, and “with.”

A noun or pronoun **with the preposition is considered a prepositional phrase**. This phrase usually behaves as an adjective or an adverb. See the “Phrases” section of this handout for explanations of this, and other types of phrases. (See our preposition handout for more information)

## Conjunction

**Conjunctions** join words, clauses, or phrases, and show the relationship between them. There are a few different types of conjunctions.

- ◆ **coordinating conjunctions** such as “and”, “but” and “for”
- ◆ **correlative conjunctions** such as “either...or”, “not only...but also”, and “both...and”
- ◆ **subordinating conjunctions** such as “although”, “as”, “because”, “until”, and “since.”

## Interjection

**Interjections** are words that show surprise or strong emotion.

Some examples of interjections are “Oh!”, “Wow!”, and “Ugh!”

## Breaking it Down: Sentence Parts

**Sentence-** a group of words containing a subject and a predicate and conveying a complete thought. Sentences can be simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex. Please refer to the "Sentence Types" handout for more information.

**Subject-** the noun or pronoun that performs the action of the verb, is acted upon by the verb, or is described by the verb.

**Predicate-** the main verb of a sentence (including helping verbs) and its modifiers, objects, and/or complements.

- ◆ **Predicate Adjective-** an adjective that follows a linking verb; describes the subject
- ◆ **Predicate Nominative-** a noun that follows a linking verb; renames the subject

**Direct Object-** the noun that receives the action of the verb and answers the question "what?" or "whom?"

**Indirect Object-** tells to whom or for whom something is done, and always appears after the verb and before the direct object. An indirect object cannot exist without a direct object.

**Modifier-** describes something in the sentence in the form of an adjective, adverb, or any phrase or clause acting as an adjective or adverb.

**Clause-** a group of words containing a subject and a predicate.

- ◆ **Independent Clause-** a clause able to stand alone as a simple sentence.
- ◆ **Dependent Clause-** a clause that needs, or depends on, a complete sentence; unable to stand alone

**Phrase-** a group of words that does not contain a subject and predicate but acts as one unit.

- ◆ **Noun Phrase-** includes a noun and the modifiers which clarify it.

Let's take the word cat, which can be modified in several ways:

- ☐ By an article: "the cat"
- ☐ By a possessive noun or possessive pronoun: "Henry's cat" or "his cat"
- ☐ By an adjective: "the lazy cat" or "the calico cat"
- ☐ Nouns can also be modified by participles, prepositional phrases, adjective clauses, participle phrases, and infinitives.

- ◆ **Verb Phrase-** includes the verb and any direct or indirect object.

Can be one, two, three, or even four verbs. Verb phrases are italicized below.

- ☐ Marsha *laughed*. (One-verb phrase.)
- ☐ Marsha *is always laughing* at jokes. (Two-verb phrase. Note that adverbs, in this case the word "always," are not part of the phrase.)
- ☐ Marsha *would have laughed* at that joke. (Three-verb phrase.)
- ☐ Marsha *should have been laughing* at that joke. (Four-verb phrase.)

- ◆ **Prepositional Phrase-** includes a preposition and a noun, such as "for me", "to John", "at home", and "in time".

# Example Sentences

## Simple Sentences: one independent clause.

- ◆ Mary is pretty and smart.  
S V P.A.
- ◆ I told Mary she was pretty and smart.  
S V I.O. D.O.
- ◆ I said to Mary "you are pretty and smart."  
S V I.O. D.O.

## Compound Sentences: two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or a semicolon.

- ◆ Mary is pretty, and she is also smart.  
S V P.A. C.C. S V P.A.
- ◆ She has her degree in engineering; she is proud of that accomplishment.  
S V P.N. P.P. S V P.A. P.P.

## Complex Sentences: one independent clause and one dependent clause.

- ◆ Because Mary worked hard and is smart, she has her degree in engineering.  
P.N. V.P. S V P.A. P.P.

\*Note that if the dependent clause precedes the independent clause, you need a comma.

- ◆ Mary has her degree in engineering because she worked hard and is smart.  
S V P.N. P.P. P.N. V.P.

\*Note that if the independent clause precedes the dependent clause, you do not need a comma.

## Compound/Complex Sentences: two or more independent clauses and one dependent clause.

- ◆ Although Mary has her bachelor's degree, she hopes to return to school to earn her doctoral degree,  
V.P. & D.C. S P.A. P.P.

and then she wants to teach engineering.

C.C. S P.A. P.P.

- ◆ Mary has many career path options with a degree in engineering, so even though she wants to teach,  
S P.A. D.O. P.P. C.C. D.C.

she may go into research.

S P.A. P.P.

# Now Give it a Try!

Are the following sentences simple, compound, or complex? Label the clauses as independent or dependent.

- 1) Although I've never seen penguins in their natural habitat, I have seen them at the zoo.
- 2) The fruit bowl is currently full of apples, bananas, peaches, and oranges.
- 3) Some people think soda is best with pizza, but I think it enhances every meal; still, I try to limit my soda consumption.

Identify the subject and predicate in the following sentences.

- 4) Bacon is delicious.
- 5) He eats bacon at every meal; it compliments sandwiches and salads well.
- 6) Vegans and vegetarians can enjoy tofu bacon.

Name all the parts of the following sentences (subject, predicate adjective, predicate nominative, direct object, indirect object, noun phrase, verb phrase, and prepositional phrase).

- 7) Forrest Gump ran.
- 8) Forrest Gump ran away from the bullies.
- 9) Forrest Gump ran away from the bullies after Jenny told him to do so, and he made it to safety unscathed.

1) Complex. Dependent clause followed by an independent clause.

2) Simple.

3) Compound. Three independent clauses.

4) Subject: bacon. Predicate: is delicious.

5) Subjects: "he" and "it". Predicates: "eats bacon" and "compliments sandwiches and salads".

6) Subjects: "vegans" and "vegetarians". Predicate: can enjoy tofu bacon (helping verb precedes main verb).

7) Subject: Forrest Gump. Predicate: ran.

8) Subject: Forrest Gump. Predicate: ran. Indirect Object: the bullies. Direct Object: away from. Prepositional Phrase: away from the bullies (the preposition is two words: away from).

9) Subjects: "Forrest Gump" and "he". Predicates: "ran away from" and "made it". Indirect Object: away from. Direct

Objects: "the bullies" and "it". Prepositional Phrases: away from the bullies, after Jenny, and to safety. BONUS:

Dependent Clause: after Jenny told him to do so. Adjective: unscathed.

Answer Key: