

Parts of Speech

Purpose of Document

- Define the eight English parts of speech
- Provide examples of the parts of speech
- Provide an exercise for determining the parts of speech in sentences

What are parts of speech?

All languages have words, and each word of a language falls into at least one category, called a part of speech. We use the form of a word to categorize it into a part of speech. A word's form is determined by its structure in isolation, all by itself, outside the context of a sentence.

Take, for example, *snow* and *kitten*. They are both obviously different words: One is something inanimate and cold, and the other is alive and furry. Though these words are different in spelling and meaning, they share common characteristics—they are both things.

These two words can be sorted into a category called a noun, which is usually a person, creature, place, object, or idea. And there are also different types of nouns, but ultimately all nouns are physical or mental things that can perform an action or express a mode of being.

There are eight categories of words in English, and each category has subtypes (all of which are not discussed here).

1. **Nouns**
2. **Pronouns**
3. **Adjectives**
4. **Verbs**
5. **Adverbs**
6. **Conjunctions**
7. **Prepositions**
8. **Interjections**

NOUNS

A noun is a word that is usually a person, creature, place, object, or idea.

Examples

Dillon, meerkat, New Jersey, galaxy, confidence

PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word that is a proxy for a noun, noun phrase, or another object that has been previously mentioned in speech or writing: It is a replacement or substitute for a noun.

Examples

I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours, he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its, they, them, their, theirs, myself, yourself, herself, himself, itself, themselves, anyone, everyone, someone, something, this, that, these, those, which, who, whom, what, some, few, many, none.

ADJECTIVES

An adjective is a word that usually describes a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, or other object. It modifies these elements by expressing an attribute such as a trait, quality, or quantity. They help to illustrate and further define a word by adding details, telling us about specific features, or showing us characteristics.

Typically, adjectives immediately precede the words they describe.

To determine if a word is an adjective, the word will typically answer one of these questions about the element it modifies:

- a. **Which one?**
- b. **What kind of?**
- c. **How many?**

Examples

Red, happy, amazing, colorful, scary, flashy, round, wet, squishy, ugly, wealthy, intelligent, snowy, adorable, courageous, anxious, fuzzy, furry, expensive, costly, large, small, tiny, exceptional, thoughtful, thoughtless, irate, vivacious, jealous, wholesome, nasty.

Articles

Articles are a very small and specific set of adjectives: **the, a, an**.

(There are many subtypes of adjectives, like the subtypes of pronouns, but they are not discussed here.)

VERBS

A verb is a word that expresses an action, mode of being, or occurrence. It is the essential element of any sentence.

Examples

Eat, eats, eating, hit, throw, draw, design, create, swim, swims, swimming, swum, swam, sing, sings, singing, sang, sung, scream, cook, meet, study, sit, sleep, dream, read, write, think, speak, was, were, is, are.

ADVERBS

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, another adverb, or an entire sentence. It describes elements such as manner, quality, degree, circumstance, cause, time, or place.

To determine if a word is an adverb, the word will typically answer one of these questions about the element it modifies:

- a. **How?**
- b. **When?**
- c. **Where?**
- d. **Why?**
- e. **Under what conditions?**

Examples

very, happily, then, gently, really, delightfully, abruptly, there, here, in, never, yesterday, tomorrow, today, only, too, quite, enough, almost, also, so, rather, later, regularly, early, first, second, third, somewhere, now, amazingly, incredibly, wildly, rapidly.

CONJUNCTIONS

A conjunction is a word that joins two words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. It conjoins, connects, or links these elements; it serves as a junction.

Three types of conjunctions: **coordinating**, **subordinating**, and **correlative**.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions join two independent clauses. Additionally, conjunctions like *and* and *or* are commonly used to join words and phrases.

Examples

For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

Sentence Example

Marc works in the office, but Gigi works from home.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions initiate dependent clauses that link to an independent clause.

Examples

After, since, before, while, so that, if, although, because, when, whenever, as, even, though, until, unless, as if, that, whereas, whether, which, why, who.

Sentence Example

Before I left for school, I went to Starbucks.

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are pairs of conjunctions that work together to join words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. They help to show the relationship between two or more items that are being joined. When used in a sentence, correlative conjunctions help to create balance and parallelism.

Examples

Both/and, either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also whether/or, rather/than, such/that, as many/as, no sooner/than.

Sentence Example

Not only did she finish her work, but she also did extra credit.

PREPOSITIONS

Preposition + Object = Prepositional Phrase

A preposition is a word that usually precedes a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, or other object, expressing a relationship between itself and another element in the sentence.

Relationships that prepositions can show between two elements include the following:

1. **Position**
2. **Direction**
3. **Time**
4. **Location**
5. **Possession**
6. **Spatial relationships**

To determine if a word is a preposition, ask yourself: **What can I do to a cloud?** You can go *through* a cloud, *in* a cloud, *around* it, *inside* it, *above* it, *near* it, *below* it, etc. This is a simple test to use when you first practice identifying and using prepositions.

Examples of Prepositions

in, of, on, at, by, with, within, for, between, among, through, about, around, toward, below, above, beyond, due to, according to, because of.

INTERJECTIONS

An interjection is a word or phrase that expresses an emotion or command, abruptly or spontaneously. It can occur at any point in a sentence, but it usually appears at the beginning and is set off by a comma(s) or an exclamation mark. It literally interjects itself and interrupts the flow of the sentence.

Interjection Examples

Oh, ah, ew, aha, ouch, wow, look, listen, what, alas, boo, huh, gosh, yay, yikes, ow, oh well, oh no, oh really, hey, hi, hello, hmm, meh, whoops, damn, damn it, goodbye, farewell, bye, eh, ya know, okay, uh-huh, oh dear.

Exercise

For each sentence, label each word's part of speech.

Example

Wow, I actually made a perfect score on my exam, and usually that never happens.

- Wow = interjection
- I = pronoun
- Actually = adverb
- Made = verb
- A = article
- Perfect = adjective
- Score = noun
- On = preposition
- My = pronoun
- Exam = noun
- And = conjunction
- Usually = adverb
- That = pronoun
- Never = adverb
- Happens = verb

1. *Bailey frequently visits the city.*
2. *I ate some crispy doughnuts.*
3. *The summertime in South Carolina is hot and muggy.*
4. *He lives in the suburbs, and I live in the countryside.*
5. *The wooden cup burned in the fire.*