



Parts of Speech

Introduction

Overview: What are the nine main parts of speech in the English language and why do they matter?

The Nine Parts of Speech Are:

1. **Nouns:** Names a person, place, thing, idea, or quality (e.g., *student, New York City, happiness, pencil*).
2. **Pronouns:** Replaces a noun (e.g., *I, he, she, it, you, they, we*).
3. **Verbs:** Shows action or a state of being (e.g., *run, think, write, know, argue, is, seems*).
4. **Adjectives:** Describes or modifies a noun or pronoun (e.g., *big, red, happy, cold, smart*).
5. **Adverbs:** Modifies verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, telling how, when, where, or how much (e.g., *quickly, yesterday, very*).
6. **Conjunctions:** Joins words, phrases, or clauses (e.g., *and, but, to, for, or, because*).
7. **Prepositions:** Shows the relationship between a noun/pronoun and another word (e.g., *about, to, on, off, in, out, against, before, after* -- among many others).
8. **Articles:** Include *a, an*, and *the*. They precede a noun or a noun phrase in a sentence.
9. **Interjections:** Expresses sudden emotion (e.g., *Wow! Ouch! Help! Hello!*).

Knowing these parts of speech is important in writing because they provide:

- **Structure:** Shaping the framework for constructing sentences.
- **Clarity:** They help define a word's role, making meaning precise.
- **Flexibility:** Words like "work" can be nouns or verbs, and "well" can be an adverb, adjective, or a noun, depending on their use in a sentence.

1. Nouns

A noun is a word that denotes a person, place, or thing. In a sentence, nouns answer the questions "who", "what", and "where".

Example: The *dog* ran after the *ball*.

In the sentence above, there are two nouns, *dog* and *ball*. A noun may be **concrete** (something you can touch, see, etc.), like the nouns in the example, or a noun may be **abstract**, as in the sentences below.

She possesses *integrity*.

He was searching for *love*.

Nouns may also be proper.

Example 1: She visited *Chicago* every year.

Example 2: *Thanksgiving* is in *November*.

Chicago, *Thanksgiving*, and *November* are all proper nouns, and they should be CAPITALIZED.

2. Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that **takes the place of a noun** (person, place, or thing) **in a sentence**.

Pronouns minimize repetition and the number of words used, and add variety to your writing.

(See table on next page)

Examples:

Los Angeles is a very large city. **It** is located in California.

In the second sentence, "It" takes the place of "Los Angeles".

John and I have been friends for years. **We** always have fun together.

In the second sentence, "We" takes the place of "John and I".

Oksana is very independent and can do everything by **herself**. Here, "herself" is used instead of "alone" or "without any help".

Note: Like nouns, pronouns may be used either as **subjects or as objects** in a sentence.

Example 1: **She** planned to ask **him** for a loan.

Example 2: **Vlad** invited **them** to the party.

Example 3: **They** had problems with **his** attitude.

In example 1 above, both *she* and *him* are pronouns; *she* is the subject of the sentence while *him* is the object. Every subject pronoun has a corresponding object form, as shown in the shaded areas of the table on the next page.

Pronoun Chart

	Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns	Possessive Adjectives	Possessive Pronouns	Reflexive Pronouns
First Person Singular	I	Me	My	Mine	Myself
Second Person Singular	You	You	Your	Yours	Yourself
Third Person Singular (female)	She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
Third Person Singular (male)	He	Him	His	His	Himself
Third Person (general)	It	It	Its	Not Applicable	Itself
First Person (plural)	We	Us	Our	Ours	Ourselves
Second Person (plural)	You	You	Your	Yours	Yourselves
Third Person (plural)	They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves

Another type of pronoun is the **relative pronoun**. A relative pronoun introduces a relative clause (or adjective clause) that provides more information about a noun or pronoun in the main sentence. It connects the clauses and acts as a subject, object, or possessive within the clause itself.

Common examples of relative pronouns are **who**, **whom**, **whomever**, **whose**, **which**, and **that**.

- **Who**: "The student **who** won the award is in my class." (Refers to a person).
- **That**: "The car **that** I bought is red." (Refers to a person or thing).
- **Which**: "The book, **which** was old, smelled musty." (Refers to a thing).
- **Whose**: "The dog **whose** tail was wagging greeted me." (Shows possession).
- **Whom**: "The man **whom** you met is my uncle." (Refers to people, often as an object).

The type of clause determines what kind of relative pronoun to use. Generally, there are two types of relative clauses: **restrictive (defining)** and **non-restrictive (non-defining)**. In both types of clauses, the relative pronoun can function as a subject, an object, or a possessive pronoun ("whose").

Relative pronouns in restrictive relative clauses

Relative pronouns that introduce a restrictive relative clause ARE NOT separated from the main clause by a comma. **Restrictive relative clauses** (also known as defining relative clauses) add essential information about the antecedent in the main clause. The information is crucial for understanding the sentence's meaning correctly and cannot be omitted. In other words, without the restrictive relative clause, the sentence does not make sense.

Relative pronouns in non-restrictive relative clauses

Although similar in use, relative pronouns that introduce a non-restrictive relative clauses **ARE** separated from the main clause by a comma (in most instances). Typically, **which** is the preferred relative pronoun for indicating that a relative clause is non-restrictive. **Non-restrictive relative clauses** (also known as non-defining relative clauses) provide non-essential information about the antecedent in the main clause. The information is not crucial for understanding the sentence's meaning correctly and can be omitted without affecting the sentence's meaning. In other words, non-restrictive relative clauses are an aside that adds extra information.

The table below sums up the use of relative pronouns in restrictive relative and non-restrictive relative clauses.

Restrictive Relative Clauses	Non-Restrictive Relative Clauses
<p>Definition: a relative clause that is essential to the meaning of a sentence</p> <p>Examples (relative pronouns/adjectives in bold):</p> <p>The paper that I have just finished is due tomorrow.</p> <p>The employees who work this afternoon are late.</p>	<p>Definition: a relative clause that is not essential to the meaning of a sentence</p> <p>Examples (relative pronouns/adjectives in bold):</p> <p>The final manuscript, which was well formatted, was submitted on time.</p> <p>The woman, whoever/whomever she was, was very rude.</p>

3. Verbs

Verbs are words that show **an action** (*sing*), **occurrence** (*develop*), or **state of being** (*exist*).

Action verbs

Examples: ride, be, run, fight, swim, study, shout, laugh, hit.

Example 1: Beth *rides* the bus every day.

Example 2: Paul *was* an avid reader.

In example 1, *rides* is the verb; it describes what the subject, Beth, does.

In example 2, *was* describes Paul's state of being and is therefore the verb.

Note: There may be multiple verbs in a sentence, or there may be a verb phrase consisting of a verb plus a helping verb.

Example 1: She *turned* the key and *opened* the door.

Example 2: Jackson *was studying* when I saw him last.

In example 1, the subject *she* performs two actions in the sentence, *turned* and *opened*. In example 2, the verb phrase is *was studying*.

Note: Some action verbs express actions that **cannot be seen** because they are **taking place mentally**.

Examples: trust, ponder, consider, evaluate, worry.

Verb Forms

Almost every sentence requires a verb. The **basic form** of a verb is known as its **infinitive**. The forms *call*, *love*, *break*, and *go* are infinitives.

Almost all verbs have two other important forms called **participles**. Participles are forms that are used to create several verb tenses (to show when an action happened). They can also be used as adjectives.

The **present participle** always ends in *-ing*: (*calling*, *loving*, *breaking*, *going*).

Note: There is also a kind of noun, called a **gerund**, that is identical in form to the present participle form of a verb. They take on roles like subject, object, or complement.

Example: *They bonded over their shared love of hiking.*

Example: *I hope to set a new record in swimming.*

The **past participle** usually ends in *-ed* or *-ied* (*called*, *loved*, *carried*) for regular verbs, but the past participle of many irregular verbs has different endings: *written*, *broken*, *gone*.

4. Adjectives

An adjective is a word that **modifies, or describes**, a noun or pronoun. Adjectives may precede nouns, or they may appear after a form of the reflexive verb to be (am, are, is, was, etc.).

Example 1: We live in the *red brick* house.

Example 2: She is *tall* for her age.

In example 1, two consecutive adjectives, *red* and *brick*, both describe the noun (*house*).

In example 2, the adjective (*tall*) appears after the reflexive verb (*is*) and describes the pronoun (*she*).

5. Adverbs

Just as adjectives modify nouns, **adverbs modify, or further describe, verbs**. Adverbs **may also modify adjectives**. (Many, though not all, adverbs end in *-ly*.)

Example 1: He waved *wildly* to get her attention.

Example 2: The shirt he wore to the party was *extremely* bright.

Example 3: His friends will visit him tomorrow.

In the first example, the adverb, *wildly*, modifies the verb *waved*.

In the second example, the adverb, *extremely*, modifies the adjective *bright*, which describes the noun *shirt*.

In the third example, the adverb *tomorrow*, modifies the verb, visit, by informing us when the friends will visit.

Note: While nouns answer the questions *who* and *what*, adverbs answer the questions *how*, *when*, *why*, and *where*.

6. Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word **that joins two independent clauses, or sentences, together**.

Example 1: Ellen wanted to take a drive into the city, *but* the cost of gasoline was too high.

Example 2: Richard planned to study abroad in Japan, *so* he decided to learn the language.

In the examples above, **both but and so are conjunctions**. They join two complete sentences with the help of a comma. *And, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet* can all act as conjunctions.

FANBOYS is a popular acronym used in English grammar to **remember the seven most used coordinating conjunctions**: **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**. These words show the relationship between ideas, like adding information (and), showing contrast (but, yet), or presenting a choice (or).

7. Prepositions

Prepositions work in combination with a noun or pronoun to create phrases that modify verbs, nouns/pronouns, or adjectives. Prepositional phrases convey a spatial, temporal, or directional meaning.

Example: Ivy climbed *up* the brick wall *of* the house.

There are two prepositional phrases in the example above: *up* the brick wall and *of* the house. The first prepositional phrase is an **adverbial phrase**, since it modifies the verb by describing where the ivy climbed. The second phrase further modifies the noun *wall* (the object of the first prepositional phrase) and describes which wall the ivy climbs.

Common prepositions in the English language: *aboard, about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, besides, between, beyond, by, down, during, except, from, in, into, like, near, of, off, on, onto, out, over, past, since, though, to, toward, under, underneath, until, unto, up, upon, with, within, without.*

8. Articles

Articles include *a*, *an*, and *the*. They precede a noun or a noun phrase in a sentence.

Example: They wanted *a* house with a big porch.

Example: He bought *the* blue sweater on sale.

Example: The man caused *an* accident because he was texting while driving.

In example 1, the article *a* precedes the noun *house*, and *a* also precedes the noun phrase *big porch*, which consists of an adjective (big) and the noun it describes (porch).

In example 2, the article *the* precedes the noun phrase *blue sweater*, in which *sweater* is the noun and *blue*, the adjective.

In example 3, the article *an* precedes the noun *accident*.

9. Interjections

An interjection is an outcry or sudden utterance, usually a word or phrase that is grammatically independent from the words around it, and mainly expresses feeling rather than meaning.

Examples:

Wow! Darn. Oh no! Look out!

Oh, what a beautiful house!

Uh-oh, this looks bad.

Well, it's time to say good night.

Actually, it's not my dog.

Shoot. I thought I'd fixed that.

I can't believe I lost the key! *Ugh!*

Note: Interjections are common in speech and are much more common in electronic messages than in other types of writing.

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Nouns

In each sentence below, circle the noun or nouns (some sentences have more than one).

1. My wallet is missing.
2. Oksana was really hungry, so she had a hamburger and a salad.
3. It was so cold outside, that my coat couldn't keep me warm enough.
4. I'm staying at a fancy hotel while in California.
5. Tomorrow, I'm shopping for a coat, boots, and socks.

From the choices below each sentence, identify the nouns and place them in the blank spaces in each sentence. Some require more than one noun.

1. My _____ isn't working properly and keeps crashing.
[pretty, go, computer, me]
2. Tomorrow, my _____ are giving me a _____ for my birthday.
[graduation, parents, happy, puppy, difficult]
3. Next fall, I will be enrolling at a new _____ to study for my degree.
[annoying, myself, college, run]
4. Michael's _____ said she was concerned about his health, so she told him to see a _____. [crying, study, ugly, mother, windy, doctor]
5. I am so happy that Jane met someone and can stop looking for _____.
[them, sorry, love, carefully]

Exercise 2: Proper Nouns

Identify and circle the proper noun/s in each sentence below.

1. Kolkata is the capital of West Bengal.
2. Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday.
3. The teacher gave a lesson about George Washington.

4. My birthday is in November.
5. The crowd at Yankee Stadium is very big.

In the following paragraph, identify and capitalize the proper nouns.

My family and I plan to go on vacation in September. We are thinking of going to Hawaii. We've heard many great things about it. Aside from its beauty, many famous people come from there. Former president Barack Obama, singers Don Ho and Bruno Mars, and actor and musician Jason Momoa, are among them. We also want to see Volcanoes National Park and beautiful Kalaupapa National Historical Park on Molokai. We may take the kids to Sea Life Park and to surfing on Waikiki Beach. If we have time, we want to take a whale-watching tour. I hope we can take this trip because we love traveling together.

Exercise 3: Pronouns

Read the following sentences and fill in the blanks with appropriate pronouns.

1. Daniel is a good boy. _____ always listens to _____ teacher.
2. Amit and Sumit are twin brothers. People have difficulty telling _____ apart.
3. Milly and I are very good friends. _____ have known each other since childhood.
4. The bananas are very mushy. Where did you buy _____?
5. I love watching cartoons. _____ reminds me of my childhood days.
6. I bought this book for my sister. _____ often read it together.
7. This is my friend, Steve. Do you know _____?
8. There are many windows here, and many of _____ are jammed.
9. The airplane has reached _____ destination.
10. My aunt and uncle live in Moscow. _____ often visit _____.
11. _____ don't need any help with _____ homework. I can do _____ by _____.
12. New York is a large city. _____ attracts visitors from around the world.
13. Many people don't have any family, so they live by _____.

Exercise 4: Relative Pronouns

Read the given sentences and fill in the blank spaces with the right relative pronouns.

1. We always like people ____ speak the truth.
2. Can you tell _____ pen this is?
3. The boy _____ I met in Ukraine is staying near our house.
4. This is the house in _____ George Washington lived.
5. These are the vegetables _____ my mother and I planted together.
6. The teacher punished the students _____ were shouting.
7. I don't think there's anyone _____ doesn't like chocolate.
8. Are these the people about _____ you were talking?
9. The car _____ my uncle brought is quite expensive.
10. Do you know _____ car is parked in front of our gate?
11. I found the documents _____ I had been looking for.
12. Noreen has the information _____ we've been looking for.
13. A teacher _____ helps all children is considered good.

Exercise 5: Verbs

Select the answer that identifies the verb in the sentence.

1. **The interior temperatures of even the coolest stars are measured in millions of degrees.**
A. coolest
B. of even
C. are measured
D. in millions
2. **Thomas Edison tried many filaments for his incandescent lamp.**
A. many
B. for his
C. filaments
D. tried
3. **Jill sets the plates on the table.**
A. the
B. plates
C. table
D. sets

4. **The child's balloon was slowly rising into the sky.**
A. rising
B. slowly
C. into
D. balloon

5. **The shoes were still lying where Ethan had left them.**
A. still
B. were
C. them
D. shoes

6. **Several changes in classroom procedures were affected by the new principal.**
A. changes
B. in
C. by
D. affected

7. **The soaked papers were placed in the sunlight.**
A. soaked
B. papers
C. placed
D. in the

8. **The letter from the teacher implied that the child was not turning in his work.**
A. from
B. not
C. his
D. Turning

9. **Luke didn't mean to hurt you during the baseball game.**
A. baseball
B. during
C. Luke
D. Mean

10. **Amber used to recite the alphabet in Chinese.**

- A. the
- B. alphabet
- C. in
- D. recite

Exercise 6: Verb Forms – Gerunds

Identify the gerund phrase in the following sentences.

1. Laughing with my classmates is the best feeling in the world.

- A. Laughing with my classmates
- B. with my classmates
- C. is the best feeling in the world
- D. feeling in the world

2. In the mornings, Jodie loves walking with her grandfather.

- A. In the mornings
- B. Jodie loves walking
- C. walking with her grandfather
- D. with her grandfather

3. Reading to her students is Ms. Sharma's favorite time of the day.

- A. Reading to
- B. Reading to her students
- C. favorite time
- D. favorite time of the day

4. She has a preference of eating her pizza with mustard.

- A. She has a preference of
- B. of eating her pizza
- C. eating her pizza with mustard
- D. with mustard

5. The two best friends enjoyed painting murals.

- A. The two best friends
- B. best friends enjoyed
- C. enjoyed painting murals
- D. painting murals

Exercise 7: Adjectives

Circle the adjectives in the following paragraphs.

1. Scary monsters are found everywhere. Some are frightening and some are strange. There are enormous, hairy monsters, and small, fuzzy monsters. Some are imaginary, like angry trolls that live in dark, damp caves or under old, wooden bridges. Others live in dense, overgrown forests and eat slimy, disgusting food. Monsters can be green, red, or black. **(Note: there are 20 adjectives in this paragraph.)**
2. If you spot a hideous monster, you should run away fast. Don't stare into their beady eyes. Don't stare at their sharp teeth. Just run. Keep your wide eyes looking forward so you don't trip and fall. Keep running until you see your beautiful house. Run inside the safe, warm house and shut the heavy door. **(Note: there are 8 adjectives in this paragraph.)**

Exercise 8: Adverbs

Underline the adverbs in the following sentences.

1. She danced gracefully at the party.
2. He will visit us tomorrow.
3. The children played outside.
4. I rarely eat fast food.
5. She is incredibly talented.
6. He left because he was tired.
7. They arrived early to the meeting.
8. She sings beautifully.
9. We will leave soon.
10. He finished his work quickly.

Exercise 9: Adjective OR Adverb?

Choose the correct item:

1. He (correct, correctly) defined the terms. The answer sounded (correctly, correct).
2. She (quickly, quick) adjusted the fees. She adapted (quick, quickly) to any situation.
3. He measured the floor (exact, exactly). They proved to be (perfectly, perfect) (exact, exactly) measurements.
4. The stillness of the tomb was (awfully, awful). The tomb was (awfully, awful) still.
5. It was a (dangerously, dangerous) lake to swim in. The man was (dangerous, dangerously) drunk. The gas smelled (dangerously, dangerous).
6. She performed (magnificent, magnificently). It was a (magnificent, magnificently) beautiful performance.
7. Her voice sounds (beautifully, beautiful). She sang the song (exact, exactly) as it was written. We heard it (perfectly, perfect).
8. He was a very (sensibly, sensible) person. He acted very (sensible, sensibly).
9. Mike wrote too (slow, slowly) on the exam. He always writes (slow, slowly).
10. Talk (softly, soft) or don't talk at all. The music played (softly, soft).

Exercise 10: Conjunctions

Choose the best answer to complete each sentence.

1. **Would you rather have cheese _____ bologna on your sandwich?**
 - a. For
 - b. Nor
 - c. Or
 - d. So
2. **His two favorite sports are football _____ tennis.**
 - a. Or
 - b. And
 - c. Nor
 - d. For
3. **I wanted to go to the beach, _____ Mary refused.**
 - a. But
 - b. Or
 - c. So
 - d. For

4. I am allergic to cats, ---- I have three of them.

- a. Or
- b. For
- c. Yet
- d. So

5. I am a vegetarian, ---- I don't eat any meat.

- a. So
- b. Yet
- c. Nor
- d. But

Exercise 11: Prepositions

The following exercises will help you gain greater understanding about how prepositions work. Choose the best answer to complete each sentence.

1. We are going on vacation _____ August.

- a. On
- b. At
- c. In
- d. Since

2. Please put the vase _____ the table.

- a. In
- b. On
- c. For
- d. Over

3. I received a present _____ Janet.

- a. From
- b. Of
- c. By
- d. About

4. School begins _____ Monday.

- a. In
- b. On
- c. From
- d. Since

5. A new store opened _____ my house.

- a. Of
- b. In
- c. By
- d. Out

6. I have to clean _____ the old food from the refrigerator this weekend.

- a. Down
- b. Like
- c. Up
- d. Out

7. The elevator wasn't working, so I had to walk _____ four flights of stairs!

- a. Behind
- b. Over
- c. Up
- d. Off

Exercise 12: Articles

Write “a”, “an”, or “the” in the following sentences:

1. I had _____ egg for breakfast.
2. I broke _____ cup on the table.
3. My mother bought _____ umbrella last night.
4. Betty spells her name with _____ "i", not with _____ "y".
5. After _____ hour, we got tired and went home.
6. The new student borrowed _____ only ESL book from the office.
7. My teacher has _____ M.A. degree from Columbia University.
8. I would like to have _____ hundred dollars.
9. It was _____ honor to meet _____ governor of New Jersey.
10. My cousin joined _____ union. She is _____ newest member.

Exercise 13: Interjections

Circle the interjection that belongs with each of the sentences below.

1. This coffee's far too hot. I've burnt my tongue. a. Ouch! b. Oops! c. Phew!
2. Sorry. I wasn't looking where I was going. I'll buy you another coffee.
a. Wow! b. Hmm. c. Oops!
3. That dessert looks absolutely revolting! a. Yuck! b. Yum! c. Brr!
4. You'll wake the baby if you're not careful. a. Phew! b. Shh! c. Hmm.
5. This pie is delicious! Can I have another slice? a. Ouch! b. Yuck! c. Yum!
6. It's like a freezer in here. We'd better turn up the heat. a. Brr! b. Hmm. c. Phew!
7. I wonder where I put my glasses. I thought they were in my bag. a. Oops! b. Wow! c. Hmm.
8. That's my bike. Get your hands off it! a. Wow! b. Hey! c. Hmm.
9. If we'd arrived any later, we would have missed the train. a. Ouch! b. Shh! c. Phew!
10. I've never met a six-month-old baby that could walk before. That's amazing!
a. Wow! b. Phew! c. Yum!