



OU Writing Center  
The University of Oklahoma

## Parts of Speech

This guide includes definitions and examples of the different parts of speech used in Standardized Academic Edited English. Writers can use this guide to refresh or develop their familiarity with parts of speech and the specific work they do.

This guide includes information on:

<a href="#">Nouns</a>	<a href="#">Pronouns</a>	<a href="#">Verbs</a>	<a href="#">Adjectives</a>
<a href="#">Adverbs</a>	<a href="#">Prepositions</a>	<a href="#">Conjunctions</a>	<a href="#">Interjections</a>

### Noun:

a person, place, thing, or idea.

Nouns can be **abstract** (intangible concepts like hope or power) or **concrete** (actual physical things like stairs or a book).

**Proper** nouns name specific, individual people or things and are capitalized (e.g. Sojourner Truth, the Treaty of Versailles).

**Common** nouns don't identify particular, specific things and are not capitalized (e.g. dog, farm, house).

**Countable** nouns are those that can be counted individually (e.g. notebooks, rocks, buses). The plural form of these is created by adding -s or -es to the end of the word.

**Uncountable** (or mass) nouns can't be counted even though they can be understood as being plural in some way (e.g. water, sugar, sand).

## Pronoun:

takes the place of a noun

### • Personal Pronouns

**Personal** pronouns give information about the noun, such as if it is first person (I), second (you), or third person (they). Personal pronouns also can let us know if the noun is singular or plural. They can also indicate gender or perceived gender.

**Personal** pronouns include **nominative/subjective** pronouns, **objective** pronouns, **reflexive/intensive** pronouns, and **possessive** pronouns.

- **Nominative/Subjective** pronouns are used as the subject of a sentence.

Nominative/Subjective	Singular	Plural
First person	I	We
Second person	You	You
Third person	She/He/It	They

- **Objective pronouns** are used as a direct object, indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Objective	Singular	Plural
First person	Me	Us
Second person	You	You
Third person	Her/Him/It	Them

- **Reflexive/Intensive pronouns** refer to an earlier noun/pronoun in the sentence. **Reflexive** pronouns are required to ensure the meaning of the sentence is clear while **intensive** pronouns are used to add emphasis.

Reflexive/Intensive	Singular	Plural
First person	Myself	Ourselves
Second person	Yourself	Yourselves
Third person	Herself/Himself/Itself	Themselves

Examples:

*Reflexive:* Her group members didn't show up, so Olivia finished the project **herself**.

*Intensive:* Dr. Rees **herself** sent us the email that class was cancelled.

- **Possessive pronouns** show that a noun is possessed by someone or something.

Possessive	Singular	Plural
First person	My/Mine	Our/Ours
Second person	Your/Yours	Your/Yours
Third person	Her/Hers His/His Its	Their/Theirs

- **Possessive pronouns** show that a noun has possession of something (e.g., *That’s mine.* or *That’s my pen.*) and can be singular or plural.

✓ Possessive pronouns that describe a noun that immediately follows it include:

“my,” “our,” “your,” “his,” “her,” “its,” “their.”

Example: That is **my** hat.

✓ Possessive pronouns that stand on their own in place of a noun include: “mine,” “ours,” “yours,” “his,” “hers,” “its,” “theirs.”

Example: The hat is **mine**.



## ● Impersonal Pronouns

**Impersonal** pronouns don’t convey person status, singularity/plurality, or gender and aren’t changed to note specific things about the noun referenced.

Impersonal pronouns include **indefinite** pronouns, **reciprocal** pronouns, **interrogative** pronouns, and **demonstrative** pronouns.

- **Indefinite Pronouns:** *The perhaps most well-known indefinite pronouns begin with “some-,” “every-,” “any-,” and “no-.”*

Examples:

anyone	someone	everyone	no one
anybody	somebody	everybody	nobody
anything	something	everything	nothing

✓ Words that identify a number or amount are also considered **indefinite** pronouns.

Examples: “many,” “each,” “both,” “none,” and the cardinal numbers (one, two, etc.)

- **Reciprocal pronouns** show a relationship of mutual exchange.  
Examples: “each other” and “one another.”
- **Interrogative pronouns** are used to begin a question: “who,” “whom,” “whose,” “what.”
- **Demonstrative pronouns** identify a specific noun: “this,” “that,” “these,” “those.”

## Verb:

shows either action or a state of being

Verbs are said to be either **active** or **passive**.

**Active** verbs show the subject of that verb is performing the action. A **passive** verb shows that the subject is not performing the action (sometimes receiving it) and is “passive” in that sentence.

Sentences using **passive** verbs can be rewritten with **active** verbs, shifting the sentences from passive to active voice.

Examples:

Passive – “Signs **were placed** on the South Oval by several organizations.”

Active – “Several organizations **placed** signs on the South Oval.”

In the first sentence, the subject (signs) is receiving the action (placed) by members of the organizations. In the second sentence, the subject (organization members) performs the action of placing signs on the South Oval.

Active verbs show either action or a state of being. Verbs showing action can be **transitive** or **intransitive**.

**Transitive** verbs are followed by an object that receives the action.

Example: My roommate returned **books** to Bizzell Library.

**Intransitive** verbs are not followed by an object.

Example: I overslept.

Some verbs demonstrate a noun’s **State of Being**. These include **be verbs** and **linking verbs**.

**Be verbs** are the variety of forms that can be created by the verb “to be.” They include: “am,” “is,” “are,” “was,” “were,” “been,” and “being.”

**Linking verbs** can be replaced by a *be* verb without significantly changing the sentence’s meaning.

Example: The weather **was** nice.

The weather **seemed** nice.

The weather **looked** nice.

The weather **remained** nice.

The weather **felt** nice.

The weather **appeared** nice from inside my dorm room.

## Adjective:

describes, identifies, or specifies something about a noun or pronoun.

**Adjectives** answer three questions:

1) Which one?

Example: I wanted *that* parking spot.

2) How many?

Example: I've had *three* cups of coffee so far today.

3) What kind?

Example: They gave me an *OU* hoodie for my birthday.

## Adverb:

addresses how, when, or where a verb does its work

**Adverbs** also answer three questions:

1) How?/In what manner?/Under what condition?

Example: The quarterback scrambled *frantically* to avoid being sacked.

2) When?

Example: My last final exam is *tomorrow*.

3) Where?

Example: They ran *there*.

## Preposition:

relates a noun or pronoun to the rest of the sentence

Consider this sentence:

I walked \_\_\_ the Writing Center.

The sentence doesn't make sense until we fill the blank with a **preposition**.

I walked *to* the Writing Center.

I walked *by* the Writing Center.

I walked *around* the Writing Center.

I walked *into* the Writing Center.

**Prepositions** can also show time or condition:

Examples:

Don't fall asleep **during** class.

Taylor repeatedly missed class **despite** our professor's advice.

Examples of prepositions:

about	because of	during	over
above	before	except	past
according to	behind	from	since
across	below	in/inside	through/out
after	between	into	to/toward
along	beyond	like	under
around	by	near	up
as	despite	off/on	with
at	down	out/outside	within/without

### Conjunction:

connects words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence

**Coordinating Conjunctions** are used to connect two complete sentences (independent clauses).

You can remember these with the acronym FANBOYS (**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o).

If any of the words in FANBOYS are being used to connect two sentences that can stand on their own, there should be a comma included before the conjunction.

Example:

I didn't cheer very loud, **but** I lost my voice, anyway.

**Subordinating Conjunctions** join adverb clauses (that talk about how/under what condition/in what manner, when, where) to a sentence.

Examples:

They'll come to dinner **if** we pick a restaurant in Norman.

I went home **after** the game.

We sang **while** we drove.

**Correlative Conjunctions** are used in pairs and include – both/and, either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, and whether/or.

Examples:

I want to eat at **either** Raisin' Canes **or** Panera Bread.

Our professor **not only** canceled the quiz **but also** brought candy.

**Conjunctive Adverbs** are adverbs that do the conjunction work of combining two complete sentences when they follow a semicolon.

The semicolon shows the joining of the sentences into one, and the **conjunctive adverb** shows the relationship between the ideas of the two sentences.

Examples:

I didn't sleep well; **therefore**, I need coffee.

They wanted to join us; **however**, their car was out of gas.

Examples of conjunctions:

accordingly	furthermore	instead	nevertheless	still
additionally	hence	likewise	nonetheless	then
also	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	therefore
consequently	in fact	moreover	otherwise	thus

### Interjection:

A word used to express different levels of emotion.

While **interjections** don't perform a specific grammatical function, they're used to provide additional emphasis or "flavor" to sentences.

Examples:

**Wow!** It's windy today.

**Well,** my 9:00am class was fun.



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