

Parts of Speech

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

The most common parts of speech are **nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions**. This handout will provide only a basic overview of each. For further information, see the UVU Writing Center's handouts on these specific topics.

Nouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns name specific people, places, things, or ideas and should be capitalized.

EXAMPLES: Dr. Johns, The Library of Congress, the Golden Gate Bridge

Common Nouns

Common nouns are general types of nouns or any nouns that are not proper.

EXAMPLES: doctor, library, bridge

Pronouns

Pronouns replace nouns to avoid repetition. They usually replace nouns that directly precede them.

EXAMPLES: Mike crashed **his** car the day **he** got **it**. (*He* and *his* refer to *Mike*; *it* refers to *car*.)
The paper is not Sarah's; **hers** is about rainforests. (*Hers* replaces *Sarah's*.)

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns relate clauses to the word (or words) the clauses modify. *That* and *which* are used with things, and *who*, *whom*, and *whose* are used with people.

EXAMPLES: The girl **who** took Lisa's class loved it. (The phrase *who took Lisa's class* modifies *girl*.)
He sold the computer **that** broke. (*That broke* describes *computer*.)

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns show ownership. They include words such as *my*, *mine*, *your*, *yours*, *his*, *her*, *hers*, *its*, *our*, *ours*, *their*, and *theirs*.

EXAMPLE: Yuki is annoyed because **her** husband just lost **his** keys. (*Her* refers to *Yuki*; *his* refers to *her husband*.)

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns take the place of nouns that have not been named at all. They refer to non-specific things. Some common indefinite pronouns are *all*, *any*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *few*, *neither*, *none*, *no one*, *one*, *several*, and *something*.

EXAMPLE: **Someone** moved **everything** out of the living room.

Adjectives

Adjectives are words that modify nouns or pronouns. They answer questions such as What kind?, How many?, Which one?, or Whose?

EXAMPLES: **blue-green** cars, **hard** rock, **young** man (What kind?)
ten apples, **some** people, **many** shirts (How many?)
the smartest student, **that** backpack (Which one?)
Jamal's house, **the baby's** toy (Whose?)

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Prepositions

Prepositions often describe time or space relationships and are almost always followed by a noun (the **object of the preposition**).

EXAMPLES: They left **in** the morning. (The phrase *in the morning* modifies the verb *left*.)
Brian stood **outside** the door. (The phrase *outside the door* modifies *stood*.)

Verbs

Verbs express action or show a state of being. There are three types of verbs.

Action Verbs

Action verbs show some kind of activity, either physical or mental.

EXAMPLES: Kathy **lifted** the book and began **to read**.
I **like to think** about the time I **flew** to Hawaii.

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs connect the subject to a noun, pronoun, or adjective that describes it.

EXAMPLES: That man **was** my boss.
The plant **looked** wilted.

Helping Verbs

Helping verbs work with other verbs to form a complete verb phrase or to show tense.

EXAMPLE: **Will** you **be** going to the party tomorrow? (*Will be* helps *going*.)
I **could have** won the game. (*Could have* helps *won*.)

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They answer questions such as How?, When?, Where?, and To what extent? Often, they can be recognized by an *-ly* ending.

EXAMPLES: Paolo skis **more gracefully** than Peter. (How?)
Take out the trash **now**. (When?)
You ran **upstairs**. (Where?)
Xiao plays the guitar **very well**. (To what extent?)

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join or connect other words, phrases, and clauses within a sentence.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses that are equally important.

EXAMPLES: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so** (FANBOYS)

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions also connect words, phrases, and clauses that are equally important, but these conjunctions are always used in pairs.

EXAMPLES: **Both** Becky **and** Laurissa were busy.
Neither Utah **nor** Wyoming was mentioned.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions show relationships of time, reason, purpose, or condition between two parts, or clauses, of the sentence.

EXAMPLES: **When** I went to Disneyland, I took a picture of Mickey. (Time relationship)
Keisha was upset **because** her boyfriend moved away. (Cause or reason)