

# Grammar Parts of Speech

Some of the most common parts of speech are **nouns**, **pronouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives**, **adverbs**, **conjunctions**, and **prepositions**. For further information, see the UVSC 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, or things and should be capitalized.

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

### COMMON NOUNS

Common nouns are any nouns that are not proper.

EXAMPLES: doctor, library, bridge

## PRONOUNS

Pronouns replace nouns or other pronouns in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. They usually replace nouns that directly precede them.

EXAMPLES: Mike crashed **his** bike the day **he** got **it**. (*He* and *his* refer to *Mike*; *it* refers to *bike*.)

The paper is not Sarah's; **hers** is about rainforests. (*Hers* replaces *Sarah's*.)

### RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative pronouns are words that relate clauses to the word (or words) the clauses modify. *That*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, and *whose* are all relative pronouns.

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

EXAMPLE: Libby is sad because **her** husband just lost *his* keys.

### 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 or combinations of 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?)

**Mandy's** house, **the baby's** toy (Whose?)

## PREPOSITIONS

A preposition begins a phrase that modifies another word in the sentence. Prepositions often describe time or space relationships. They 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*.)

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## VERBS

Verbs are words that 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 when I **flew** to Hawaii.

### LINKING VERBS

Linking verbs show a state of being by connecting 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 indicate 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: Rob skis **more gracefully** than Peter. (How?)  
Take out the trash **now**. (When?)  
You ran **upstairs**. (Where?)  
Jake 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** (remember 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)  
Kim was upset **because** her boyfriend moved away. (Cause or reason)