

The Basic Parts of Speech

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Learning the names of the traditional parts of speech probably won't make you witty, wealthy, or wise. In fact, learning just the *names* of the parts of speech won't even make you a better writer. But you will gain a basic understanding of the English language, which will help you to follow the other lessons in Grammar and Composition. And those lessons *will* help you to improve your writing.

As you study the table at the bottom of the page, keep in mind that only interjections ("Yes!") have a habit of standing alone (or alongside complete sentences). The three articles (now often identified as a type of determiner rather than a distinct word class) appear before nouns. However, the other parts of speech--nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions--come in many varieties and may appear just about anywhere in a sentence. To know for sure what part of speech a word is, we have to look not only at the word itself but also at its meaning, position, and use in a sentence.

For example, in the first sentence below, *work* is a noun; in the second sentence, a verb; and in the third sentence, an adjective:

- Bosco showed up for **work** two hours late.
[The noun *work* is the thing Bosco shows up for.]
- He will have to **work** until midnight.
[The verb *work* is the action he must perform.]
- His **work** permit expires next month.
[The adjective *work* modifies the noun *permit*.]

Don't let this variety of meanings and uses confuse or discourage you. Keep in mind that learning the names of the basic parts of speech is just one way to understand how sentences are put together.

Now review the parts of speech listed below, and for each one see if you can provide examples of your own. You will grow more familiar with the parts of speech as you practice using them in other lessons on this site, such as [Basic Sentence Structures](#).

Parts of Speech

PART OF SPEECH	BASIC FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
noun	names a person, place, or thing	<i>pirate, Caribbean, ship</i>
pronoun	takes the place of a noun	<i>I, you, he, she, it, ours, them, who</i>
verb	identifies action or state of being	<i>sing, dance, believe, be</i>
adjective	modifies a noun	<i>hot, lazy, funny</i>
adverb	modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb	<i>softly, lazily, often</i>
preposition	shows a relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and other words in a sentence	<i>up, over, against, by, for</i>
conjunction	joins words, phrases, and clauses	<i>and, but, or, yet</i>
interjection	expresses emotion	<i>ah, whoops, ouch</i>
article	identifies and specifies a noun	<i>a, an, the</i>

Prepositions

Words which introduce phrases that always contain either a noun or a pronoun

about	because of	during	off	to
above	before	except	on	
	toward			
according to	behind	for	onto	under
across	below	from	opposite	
	underneath			
after	beneath	in	out	unlike
against	beside	inside	outside	until
along	between	instead	over	up
amid	beyond	into	past	upon
among	by	like	regarding	with
around	concerning	minus	since	within
aside from	despite	near	through	
	without			
at	down	of	throughout	

