

SLAC PARTS OF SPEECH

Words are combined into phrases, clauses, and sentences to create meanings. Sentences consist of words used in specific ways. These specific ways are known as the parts of speech. English has eight parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. Learning to identify the parts of speech in sentences helps students to develop an understanding of how words work together in sentences. Knowing this, a student can analyze their writing, identify and eliminate many grammatical errors, and build sentences that express their exact meaning.

A. WORDS THAT NAME OR IDENTIFY THINGS:

1. A **noun** is a word that names something: a person, place, thing, or idea.

Person: woman, David, Selena, Mutter (Ger.)

Place: kitchen, park, ciudad (Sp.), Kirsche (Ger.)

Thing: tree, ship, cereal, flor (Sp.), Pullover (Ger.)

Quality or idea: love, height, motion, fuerza (Sp.), Bewegung (Ger.)

A proper noun is the name of a particular person (Jesus Christ), place (San Antonio), or thing (Friday) and is always capitalized in English.

A common noun is any noun that does not name a particular person, place, thing, or idea and is not capitalized in English unless it is the first word of a sentence. Examples are child, country, rainbow, winter, happiness, etc.

2. A **pronoun** is a word used in place of a noun. The noun which is replaced is known as the antecedent. The antecedent should be identified, either in the same sentence or in a previous sentence within the paragraph, before a pronoun is used. Some examples are:

Sally went to Paris, and she took three suitcases with her.
The speaker coughed. He reached for the water glass.
Julian tiene muchos perros, y el llevo dos de ellos con el al parque.
(Sp.)
Peter flog nach Paris und er nahm drei Koffer mit sich. (Ger.)

B. THE WORD THAT EXPRESSES ACTING, DOING, OR BEING:

3. A **verb** is a word which expresses action or state of being. A verb tells what the subject is doing, has done, or will do (this is known as an *action verb*). Verbs have many different forms. We shall focus on three of these forms -- voice, tense, transitivity -- which are especially important to us.

Active voice indicates that the subject of the sentence is doing the acting. Passive voice, on the other hand, indicates that the subject of the sentence is being acted upon.

Active Voice: Juanita kicked the ball.
Passive Voice: The ball was kicked by Juanita.

Tense indicates when the action occurs. Present tense expresses action which is happening at the present time, or which happens continuously. Past tense indicates that the action was completed at some time in the past. Future tense expresses action which will take place in the future.

Present tense: Boris is running to the store.

Past tense: Boris ran to the store.

Future tense: Boris will run to the store.

Verbs are either transitive or intransitive. A transitive verb communicates action and is always followed by an object which receives the action. An object must receive the action of a transitive verb in order to complete the meaning of the verb. The object of a transitive verb is called the *direct object* if it receives the action directly from the subject.

The bird ate the seed.

Jim broke the dish.

Maria bought a fishing rod.

Some verbs consist of several words: a main verb followed by one or more *auxillary* (helping) verbs.

The Johnsons have gone to the party.

Yo he ido dos veces a Planeta Mexico. (Sp.)

Ich bin zu mein em Onkel gegangen. (Ger.)

C. WORDS THAT DESCRIBE:

4. An **adjective** modifies a noun (or occasionally a pronoun). It **describes** that noun or limits its meaning. There are two types of adjectives.

(1) Descriptive adjectives tell what kind of person, place or thing. For example, *small car, green rug, old piano, gran edificio* (Sp.), *junger Bruder* (Ger.). Descriptive adjectives answers the question "what kind of."

(2) Limiting adjectives tell which one (*this chair or that boy*) or how many (*three dogs*). In English the adjective usually precedes the noun which it modifies.

5. An **adverb** usually modifies a verb. It describes how, when, where, or to what degree the action verb is done. There are several kinds of adverbs:

Adverbs of Manner: Pat dances *carefully*. (describes how Pat danced, *como* (Sp.), *wie* (Ger.))

Adverbs of Time: Pat danced *yesterday*. (indicates when, *cuando* (Sp.), *wenn* (Ger.))

Adverbs of Place: Pat dances *everywhere*. (indicates where, *donde* (Sp.), *wo* (Ger.))

Adverbs of Degree: Pat dances *excessively*. (indicates to what degree, *a que grado* (Sp.), *bis zu welchem grad* (Ger.))

An adverb phrase or clause can also describe why. Some adverbs can modify an adjective or another adverb. These adverbs are called intensifiers.

Pat dances quite gracefully.

D. WORDS THAT CONNECT:

6. A **conjunction** joins words or groups of words. There are two kinds of conjunctions:

(1) A coordinate conjunction (such as and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so) connects a word to a word, a phrase to a phrase, or a clause to a clause. The words, phrases, or clauses joined by a coordinate conjunction must be *equal* or of the *same type*.

John and Mary went to the store.

Edwardo is tall and handsome.

John went to the store, but Mary stayed at home.

Neither red nor black is my favorite color.

No es rojo ni negro mi color favorito. (Sp.)

Ich wohne mit mein em Vater und mein Bruder. (Ger.)

(2) A subordinate conjunction is a word or group of words that connect two clauses which are NOT equally important. The subordinate conjunction begins the dependent clause.

The Bears will win if Smith pitches.

Los Spurs van a ganar si Rodman juega. (Sp.)

Deutschland wird FuBball weltmeister, wenn alle Spieler gesund sind. (Ger.)

Other subordinate conjunctions are after, as, as if, as soon as, as though, before, in order that, provided since, so that, than, until, whenever, where, whereas, whether, and while.

7. A **preposition** is a word that shows the relationship between its object (a noun or pronoun that follows the preposition) and another word in the sentence.

The plane flew into the clouds.

El avion volo dentro de las nuves. (Sp.)

Das Flugzeug flog in die Wolker. (Ger.)

Some teachers describe the preposition as being anything that a rabbit can do to a log. For example, the rabbit can be *in* (or inside, in front of, in place of, etc.) the log, *on* the log, *behind* the log, *with* the log, *under* the log, *beside* the log, or the rabbit can go *around* the log, *over* the log, *across* the log, *among* the logs, *between* two logs, *to* (or toward) the log, *through* the log, etc.

The word group beginning with the preposition and ending with a noun is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase includes the preposition, the object of the preposition, and any modifiers of the object. The noun or pronoun is called the object of the preposition.

Juanita kicked the ball toward the goal.

E. WORDS THAT CAUSE EMOTION:

An **interjection** is included in a sentence in order to communicate strong emotion or surprise. Since an interjection has little or no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence, punctuation is used to separate an interjection from the rest of the sentence.

Well, it's not very important.

Oh, no! The boat's leaking.

No! Yo no pagare un centavo mas. (Sp.)
Na gut, du hast recht. (Ger.)

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