

CHAPTER 1

THE PARTS OF SPEECH

Let's begin with a thorough review of the parts of speech—what they are, how they work, and why they matter. Basic? Yes. Essential? You bet.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Words are the building blocks of sentences: we string them together in endless combinations of phrases, clauses, and sentences to express our ideas.

A **phrase** is a related group of words that *does not* contain both a subject and a verb (though it may contain either). A **clause** is a related group of words that *does* contain both a subject and a verb. An **independent clause** expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. A **subordinate clause** cannot stand by itself; it depends on another clause to complete its meaning.

Each word serves a particular *function* within a phrase, clause, or sentence. It might describe, name, or connect; it might show the relationship between two ideas or express emotion. A word's function can affect the *form* it will take as well as its placement. So the parts of speech are much more than just another list of things to memorize; they are the foundations of grammar.

Take the word *beauty*, for instance. Its noun form is *beauty*, the thing. If you change its part of speech, you change its form and its function in a sentence:

	Form	Function	Example
Noun	beauty	name a thing	I am overwhelmed by your <i>beauty</i> .
Verb	beautify	express an action	Flowers will <i>beautify</i> this abandoned lot.
Adjective	beautiful	describe a noun or pronoun	You are so <i>beautiful</i> .

However, not all words change form when they change part of speech.

Adjective: Hermione is a model student.

Noun: Hermione works as a model.

Verb: Hermione will model her roommate's designs in the student fashion show.

Verb: I am cooking Thanksgiving dinner for the family this year.

Noun: I enjoy cooking.

Adjective: The cooking class has been cancelled.

NOUNS

Here we will review the specific function and forms of nouns.

Function

Nouns name a person, place, or thing.

Form

- Nouns can be **singular** (*tree, glass*) or **plural** (*trees, glasses*). Most plurals are formed by adding *-s* or *-es*.
- **Collective** nouns (also called **group** nouns), name a class or a group—a single entity composed of more than one unit (e.g., *team, faculty, series*). They are usually treated as singular.
- **Concrete** nouns name tangible things (things that you can experience directly with your senses: *spider, motorcycle, mountain*). **Abstract** nouns name an idea or quality (things you can't experience with your senses: *love, apathy, peace*).
- **Proper** nouns refer to *specific* people, places, or things, like *Albert Einstein, the Milky Way, Middletown Academy*; **common** nouns refer to *general* people, places, or things: *scientist, galaxy, high school*.

Possessive pronouns indicate ownership: <i>This is <u>my</u> house.</i>	<i>Singular:</i> my, mine, your, yours, her, hers, his, its <i>Plural:</i> our, ours, your, yours, their, theirs
Reflexive pronouns indicate that the person or thing that performs the action also receives the action: <i>I hurt <u>myself</u>.</i>	<i>Singular:</i> myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself <i>Plural:</i> ourselves, yourselves, themselves
Relative pronouns introduce subordinate clauses that modify a noun or pronoun in the sentence: <i>Annette is the one <u>who</u> came up with the idea.</i>	who, whom, whose, which, what
Demonstrative pronouns identify or point to specific nouns: <i><u>This</u> is my house.</i>	this, that, these, those
Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific people or things: <i>Has <u>anybody</u> seen my keys?</i>	all, another, any, anybody, anyone, anything, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, few, many, neither, none, nobody, no one, nothing, one, several, some, somebody, someone, something
Interrogative pronouns introduce questions: <i><u>What</u> is going on here?</i>	who, whom, whose, which, what

Rachel let me borrow her old wig so no one will recognize me at the party. Now this is more like it!

The words *this, that, these, those*, and some of the indefinite pronouns can also be adjectives. The test is whether they are alone (and therefore replacing a noun) or precede a noun (and therefore modify that noun).

Adjective: This soup is delicious! (*This* modifies *soup*.)

Pronoun: This is delicious! (*This* replaces the noun *soup*.)

Adjective: All dogs go to heaven. (*All* modifies *dogs*.)

Pronoun: Justice for all. (*All* replaces *the people*.)

PRACTICE 2

Find and underline the nine words functioning as pronouns in the paragraph on the following page.

One of the most well-known fairy tales is “Little Red Riding Hood.”

There are hundreds of versions of this story throughout the world. In the most popular version in America, Little Red Riding Hood is saved by a woodsman, who cuts her out of the wolf’s belly. In other versions, Little Red Riding Hood tricks the wolf into letting her out. I find these more satisfying, because Little Red Riding Hood saves herself through her own ingenuity rather than being rescued by someone else.

VERBS

Function

Verbs express an action or state of being.

Form

Verb forms change depending upon the **person(s)** performing the action and the **tense** (when the action takes/took/will take place). We’ll review verb forms and tenses in chapters 3 and 4.

In all tenses except the simple present and past, the **verb** consists of several words: the base, which expresses the main action or state of being, and one or more **helping verbs**, which help indicate the tense (as well as voice or mood, which we’ll discuss in chapters 3 and 4).

In the following examples, helping verbs are underlined once, the base verb twice:

I am exhausted!

I am having a great time.

You should have been more careful.

We did not know that you were coming.

The evidence does not support your accusations.

We will certify that these documents are real.

Note that *am* is the base verb in the first sentence and a helping verb in the second. Forms of *be*, *do*, and *have* can be either helping verbs or base verbs. In the meantime, consider the function: Is it describing the action of the sentence, or is it helping to indicate the tense—when the action takes place?

PRACTICE 3

Underline the verbs in the following sentences, putting one line under helping verbs and two under base verbs. Only underline verbs that are functioning as verbs.

1. Look before you leap.
2. Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
3. Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
4. The early bird catches the worm.
5. You will reap what you sow.
6. Good things come to those who wait.
7. Do unto others as you would have done unto you.
8. Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.
9. A watched pot never boils.
10. Rome was not built in a day.

ADJECTIVES

Function

Adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns. They tell us *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many*.

Talk is cheap. (*Cheap* describes the noun *talk*.)

What an outrageous accusation! (*Outrageous* describes the noun *accusation*.)

There are several problems with this proposal. (*Several* describes the noun *problems*.)

You are so patient with your children. (*Patient* describes the pronoun *you*.)

Form

Adjectives don't take a specific form because just about any kind of word can function as an adjective:

He is a book aficionado. (What kind of aficionado? *Book*. Here, *book* is not a thing, but a modifier of the word *aficionado*.)

Follow that car! (Which car? *That* one. *That* doesn't replace a noun; it describes one.)

Please grab the baking powder from the pantry. (What kind of powder? *Baking* powder. *Baking* isn't an action but a description.)

PRACTICE 4

In each sentence that follows, circle which word, if any, is an adjective.

1. Meet me at the farmers' market.
2. Gala apples are in season.
3. I'll buy two dozen of them.
4. Who is that woman?
5. That smarts!
6. Elena is very smart.
7. She's also a very likeable person.
8. I am a musician.
9. Pigs are rather docile animals.
10. I've never seen a more egregious error.

ADVERBS

Function

Adverbs describe or modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They tell us when, where, how, and why; under what conditions; and to what degree.

Notice the difference between adjectives and adverbs, which are commonly confused:

Adjective: I am very patient. (*Patient* modifies the pronoun *I*.)

Adverb: I am waiting patiently. (*Patiently* tells us how I am *waiting*.)

Here are more examples of adverbs:

You will feel better soon. (*Better* modifies the verb *feel* and tells us how. *Soon* modifies *feel better* and tells us when.)

He talks so rapidly that I can hardly understand him. (*Rapidly* modifies the verb *talks* and tells us how. *So* modifies the adverb *rapidly* and also tells us how. *Hardly* modifies the verb *understand* and tells us to what degree.)

Form

Adverbs come in different shapes and sizes: *yesterday*, *very*, *clearly*, *never*. Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to adjectives (e.g., *happy* → *happily*, *slow* → *slowly*).

MEMORY TIP

To remember the difference between adjectives and adverbs, note that adjectives modify nouns or pronouns, while adverbs modify verbs as well as adjectives and other adverbs.

PRACTICE 5

Find and underline the adverbs in the following sentences.

1. Speak softly and carry a big stick.
2. Never say never.
3. Love your children unconditionally.
4. Treat yourself well and be happy.
5. You are what you eat, so choose your foods wisely.
6. Don't be so modest!
7. History often repeats itself.
8. Your spot has already been taken.
9. Just yesterday I finished the second novel in the trilogy.
10. We are desperately trying to get an answer.

PREPOSITIONS

Function

Prepositions express the relationship (often in time or space) between two words in a sentence. Prepositions include the following:

about	before	in	out	under
above	behind	inside	outside	underneath
across	below	into	over	unlike
after	beside	like	past	until
against	between	near	since	unto
along	by	next	through	up
among	despite	of	throughout	upon
around	during	off	till	with
as	for	on	to	within
at	from	onto	toward	without

Form

Prepositions always come in **prepositional phrases** beginning with the preposition and ending with a noun or pronoun. Prepositional phrases usually modify the first word (a noun or verb) in the relationship:

Please put the book on the table.

On is the preposition; *on the table* is the prepositional phrase showing the relationship between the verb *put* (the first word in the relationship) and *table* (the second). It answers the question *where*, so it functions as an adverb.

We were lost in the woods for hours.

In is the preposition; *in the woods* is the prepositional phrase. The preposition here shows the relationship between *lost* and *woods* and also tells us where. Here are more examples:

During the show, I fell asleep in my chair.

Bring your registration form with you.

Go through the tunnel, then turn left at the light.

PRACTICE 6

Underline the ten prepositional phrases in the following sentences.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Moses Jones hit a line drive into left field. Ollie Wilkins raced to third and Javier Mercado scored, sliding into home just before the tag. Behind his glove, pitcher Dennis Delaney spit on the ball. It spun wildly over home plate, but Willie Thomas sent the ball sailing out of the park.

CONJUNCTIONS

Function

Conjunctions join two or more parts of sentences—words, phrases, or clauses—and express the relationship between those parts.

Form

There are four kinds of conjunctions, each with a very specific function.

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating conjunctions connect grammatically equivalent elements (words, phrases, or clauses). There are only seven coordinating conjunctions: *and*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *but*, *so*, *yet*. The grammatically equivalent elements are bracketed in the sample sentences below:

We are [ready] and [willing] to go.

Hang your coat [in the closet] or [on the door].

[I would like to go], but [I can't].

[Sam is working today], so [he can't go either].

Remember, coordinating conjunctions work with *equivalent* parts; they can connect two words or phrases, or they can connect two independent words, phrases, or clauses. They cannot connect, for example, an independent clause and a dependent clause.

MEMORY TIP

Coordinating conjunctions connect grammatically equivalent elements. You can remember it this way: a *coordinated* outfit has *matching* clothes; a *coordinating conjunction* connects *matching* grammatical elements.

CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Correlative conjunctions are the *either/or*, *not only/but also* pairs. They also connect grammatically equivalent elements and include the following:

both...and	neither...nor
not only...but also	whether...or
not...but	as...as
either...or	

You will either wash the dishes or dry them and put them away.

Not only is he handsome, but he's also brilliant.

Whether you like it or not, I'm coming with you!

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordinating conjunctions are adverbs that introduce subordinate clauses. They're distinct from "regular" adverbs because they connect subordinate and independent clauses, showing the relationship between the two:

[We'll go outside] [when it stops raining].
[independent clause] [subordinate clause]

When connects the two clauses and shows the relationship between them (one action will take place after the other).

Subordinating conjunctions include the following:

after	even though	rather than	until
although	how	since	when
as	if	so that	whenever
as if	if only	than	where
because	in order that	that	wherever
before	now that	though	whether
even if	once	unless	while

In the examples below, the subordinating conjunctions are underlined and the subordinate clauses are bracketed. Notice that the subordinate clauses cannot stand alone because they do not express a complete thought.

[Because the proposal is due tomorrow], we need to finish it as soon as possible.

I'll cancel my meeting [so that we can have lunch together].

We'll work on the proposal [while we eat].

After lunch, we can return to my office, [where we'll try to finish it up].

[After we've submitted the proposal,] we'll go out to celebrate.

Notice that in the second to last example, *after* is simply a preposition, not a subordinating conjunction; *after lunch* is a prepositional phrase, not a subordinate clause. In the last sentence, however, *after* does introduce a subordinate clause, so it functions as a subordinating conjunction.

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

Conjunctive adverbs introduce independent clauses. They're distinct from "regular" adverbs because they connect the clause to the previous sentence or clause and show the relationship between them:

I mixed the colors over and over; finally, I got the exact shade I was looking for.

Finally introduces the second independent clause and shows its relationship to the first.

The most common conjunctive adverbs are the following:

as a result	moreover
consequently	nevertheless
finally	similarly
furthermore	therefore
however	thus

You cheated; therefore, you are disqualified from the race.

Therefore introduces an independent clause and shows its relationship to the previous clause. Notice how this is different from a subordinating conjunction introducing a subordinate clause:

Because you cheated, you are disqualified from the race.

The independent clause *therefore, you are disqualified from the race* can stand alone, but the dependent (subordinate) clause *because you cheated* cannot. Here are more examples of sentences with conjunctive adverbs:

It may seem as if you have no choice; however, there are actually many options.

Although hybrid cars are more expensive, they are more cost-effective in the long run. Moreover, they are much better for the environment. (Notice the subordinating conjunction *although* introducing the initial subordinating clause.)

You'll need to know these four kinds of conjunctions because they have specific functions; you can't use a conjunctive adverb when you need a coordinating conjunction. Still, the bottom line is this: these words *connect* and show the relationship between words, phrases, or clauses.

Here are the four conjunctions and their functions in a nutshell:

Type	Function	Examples
coordinating	connects equal parts	<i>and, or, for</i>
correlative	connects equal parts	<i>either...or, not...but</i>
subordinating	connects a subordinate clause to an independent clause	<i>although, if, because</i>
adverb	connects an independent clause to the preceding clause	<i>however, thus</i>

PRACTICE 7

Underline the conjunctions in the following sentences (some have more than one). Underneath each, write which type of conjunction it is: coord (coordinating), corr (correlative), sub (subordinating), or conj (conjunctive adverb).

Example: The game is tied, so it'll go into overtime.
coord

- I'll say yes, even though I should know better than to listen to you.
- I want to believe you, but I can't.
- Children are neither as naïve nor as innocent as we like to think.
- The battle was over, and the general was soundly defeated, yet he still believed the attack was a victory.
- I will come along for moral support; however, I'm warning you, if you try to get me involved, I will leave.
- We've had bad experiences the last two times we ate at Café Café; therefore, we've decided to move our weekly brunch to Kate's Kitchen.

INTERJECTIONS

Function

Interjections are sudden, usually emotional words or phrases that can stand alone as sentences.

Form

Interjections can be a single word or a short phrase. They are almost always followed by an exclamation point.

Hey! Look out! Egads! Holy cow! Unbelievable!

PRACTICE 8

Write three sentences with interjections.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SUMMARY

When it comes to parts of speech, the key is to look at *what the word is doing* in the sentence.

Part of Speech	Function	Examples	Notes
Noun	Name a person, place, or thing.	book, Ali, infatuation	Nouns can be singular or plural , concrete (tangible) or abstract (intangible), proper (a specific person, place, or thing) or common (general), and collective (a group functioning as a unit, such as <i>team</i>).
Pronoun	Replace or point to a noun.	me, you, them, that	There are personal (<i>I, me, them</i>), possessive (<i>mine, ours</i>), reflexive (<i>yourself, ourselves</i>), relative (<i>that, which, who</i>), demonstrative (<i>this, that</i>), indefinite (<i>anybody, no one</i>), and interrogative (<i>who, whom, whose, which, what</i>) pronouns.
Verb	Express action or state of being.	believe, juggle, float	Base verbs express the main action of the sentence. Helping verbs help indicate the tense of the base verb.

Part of Speech	Function	Examples	Notes
Adjective	Modify a noun or pronoun.	thoughtful, noisy, inquisitive	
Adverb	Modify a verb, adjective, or other adverb.	hardly, boldly, very, never	
Preposition	Express a relationship (often in time or space) between two words.	in, under, over, around, through	
Conjunction	Join parts of sentences and express the relationship between those parts.	and, for, yet; either/or; because, since; however, therefore	Four types: coordinating and correlative conjunctions (connect equal parts), subordinating conjunctions (introduce subordinate clauses), and conjunctive adverbs (introduce independent clauses).
Interjection	Express surprise or emotion.	Hey! Ouch! Oh no!	

Practice on Your Own

Choose an article in your favorite newspaper or magazine, a page in the book you're reading, even a letter you receive in the mail. Spend some time reading it carefully and looking for the eight parts of speech you reviewed in this chapter. Do you see all four types of conjunctions? Do you see helping verbs and base verbs working together?