Grammar Rules: Parts of Speech

Words are classed into eight categories according to their uses in a sentence.

1. **Noun**
Name for a person, animal, thing, place, idea, activity.
John, cat, box, desert, liberty, golf

2. **Pronoun**
Alternate name for a noun.
he, she, it

3. **Adjective**
Modifies a noun or pronoun.
big, good, full

4. **Verb**
Expresses action or existence.
went, purred, is

5. **Adverb**
Modifies a verb, adverb, or adjective.
quickly, loudly, here

6. **Conjunction**
Connects words, phrases, or clauses.
and, or, but

7. **Preposition**
Precedes phrase that acts as a modifier or noun.
with, for, at

8. **Interjection**
Expresses emotion.
Gosh! Wow! Super!

Amazingly, only eight parts of speech are used to classify hundreds of thousands of words. The challenge is that many words can be used for more than one part of speech.

Select yes on the ballot. (noun)
Cast a yes vote. (adjective)
He voted yes. (adverb)
Yes! (Interjection)

Additionally, phrases and clauses can act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

To memorize the 8 parts of speech, imagine that N’s PA VACuums PI!

BrainAid

N PA VAC PI
Noun-Pronoun-Adjective
Verb-Adverb-Conjunction
Preposition-Interjection
1. Noun = Name

- **Compound Noun**: Made of two or more words: ice water, notebook, brother-in-law
- **Appositive**: Noun or noun phrase that identifies a nearby noun or pronoun. My son *Bill* is happy.

2. Pronoun = Pro-Name

*Professional or alternate names used by nouns to enhance their careers.*

- **Pro** means “for.”
- **Pronoun** means “for a noun.”

**Types of Pronouns**

- **Personal**: I, me, mine, my / you, your / he, him, his / she, her / we, our, us / they, them, their / it...
- **Indefinite** (not specific): all, any, anyone, both, each, either, everyone, few, many...
- **Interrogative** (ask questions): what?, which?, who?, whom?, whose?...
- **Demonstrative** (point out): this, that, these, those...
- **Reflexive** (reflect back): myself, yourself, himself, herself, themselves...
- **Relative** (link dependent clauses): that, which, who, whoever, whom, whose...

**Antecedent**: The noun or noun phrase a pronoun refers to. *John* made his bed. *Ante* means “before.” *Cede* means “to go.” An antecedent in a sense “goes before” or existed before the pronoun, although it can occur afterwards in a sentence. It was John’s *bed.*
3. **Adjective Advertises**

Advertises details about a noun or pronoun by telling what kind, which one, how many....

Articles (the, a, an) are also adjectives. **Proper Adjectives** are Proper Nouns used as adjectives: *Boston* bank, *French* fries.

4. **Verb** = movement or being

Describes a noun’s movement (action) or being (existence).

**Phrasal Verbs** generally consist of a verb plus a preposition: *Turn up* the music.

5. **Adverb Adds to verb**

Adds to the meaning of a verb (or an adjective or another adverb) by telling what, when, where, why, how....

Only an adverb can modify an adjective (very good) or another adverb (very loudly).

**Adverbial Conjunctions** connect independent clauses in a compound sentence: consequently, hence, however, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, therefore...
6. Conjunction Conjoins

Connects words, phrases, or clauses “at the hip” like conjoined twins.

Coordinating (equal rank items): for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Subordinating (dependent clauses): after, although, as, as if, because, before, if, once, since, so that, than, that, unless, until, when, where, while

Correlative (item pairs): both-and, either-or, neither-nor

7. Preposition Positions

Precedes a phrase that acts as a modifier or noun by indicating a position in time, location, or manner.

Time: before/after, during, past, until

Location: above/below, across, along, around, behind, beside, between, in/out, into, near/far, on/off, over/under, through, up/down, within

Multipurpose: about, against, as, at, by, of, for, from, to, with, without

8. Interjection Ignites!

Ignites the message with an exclamation of emotion!

Interjections can stand alone or be part of a sentence.

Yes! It’s me.

Oh, is it?

Expletives are interjectory words or expressions. There is no one here! Darn it!
Parts-of-Speech Puzzles

Although there are only eight parts of speech, it can be difficult to classify some words.

Some words are easy to classify: “Is it a person, place, or thing?” (noun); “Does it modify a noun?” (adjective), etc. But many words are less obvious and can be different parts of speech depending on how they are used.

When in doubt, the best option is to consult a dictionary, which lists the various parts of speech for a word in the order of most common usage along with definitions and examples.

But even a dictionary may not make classifying easy when a word’s shades of meaning and usage are nearly identical.

For example, looking up “when” in the Random House Webster’s College Dictionary © 1996 yielded four parts of speech and ten alternate definitions. Here’s a sampling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>First Definition</th>
<th>First Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>at what time or period?</td>
<td>When are they to arrive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>at what time</td>
<td>to know when to be silent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>what time</td>
<td>Till when is the store open?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>the time of anything</td>
<td>the when and the where of an act.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table lists a dozen words (in alphabetical order) that can be difficult to classify. The parts of speech are ranked (1, 2, 3...) in the order they are listed in Webster’s dictionary.

### Parts-of-Speech Puzzles Chart

Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposition, Interjection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Pron</th>
<th>Adj</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adv</th>
<th>Conj</th>
<th>Prep</th>
<th>Int</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>how</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>than</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>that</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>then</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>what</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>when</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>where</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>which</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>who</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>why</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 12 words listed in the Chart:

- Adverbs have the most #1 rankings (7).
- Pronouns have the 2nd most #1 rankings (4).
- “What” can be six parts of speech!
- “Who” can be only one part of speech.
- Only “than” can be used as a preposition.
- No words can be verbs.
Your Turn!

Draw a line from the item to the best matching example.

Proper Noun  — peach
Common Noun  — glory
Abstract Noun — attorney general
Compound Noun — Sparky, the dog, barked
Appositive   — she was happy
Personal Pronoun — the ones who were left behind
Relative Pronoun — it was the best book
Antecedent   — an apple
Article      — Georgia peach
Proper Adjective — blow out the candle
Phrasal Verb — however, I did not go
Adverbial Conjunctive — cats and dogs
Coordinating Conjunction — because he left town
Subordinating Conjunction — under the bench
Preposition  — Oh my!
Interjection — Georgia

Following the example, mark parts of speech above each word of the sentences that follow.
Consult your dictionary as needed.

Wow! He kicked the red and white ball high into the air.

Sally slowly digested her food.

Mike rudely chewed and talked with his mouth open.

Hey! Do you think we can get some service at this restaurant?

Finally! They had been waiting forever for good food and drink.

What! Why did you not ask when the kids who went into that house returned?

Why? How was I to know more about where they were then than I do now?

[ Answers follow ]
Answers

Proper Noun
Common Noun
Abstract Noun
Compound Noun
Appositive
Personal Pronoun
Relative Pronoun
Antecedent
Article
Proper Adjective
Phrasal Verb
Adverbial Conjunctive
Coordinating Conjunction
Subordinating Conjunction
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Interjection

peach

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Sparky, the dog, barked

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Georgia peach

 blow out the candle

however, I did not go

cats and dogs

because he left town

under the bench

Oh my!

Georgia

Sally slowly digested her food.

Noun Adv Verb Pron Noun

Mike rudely chewed and talked with his mouth open.

Noun Adv Verb Conj Verb Prep Pro Noun Adj

Hey! Do you think we can get some service at this restaurant?

s Int Pro Verb Verb Verb Adv Prep Adj Noun Conj Noun

Finally! They had been waiting forever for good food and drink.


What! Why did you not ask when the kids who went into that house returned?


Why? How was I to know more about where they were then than I do now?