

Parts of Speech

The Most Important Things You Need to Know

Each word in a sentence does a specific job. These possible jobs are divided into seven categories, called the **parts of speech**, which are **nouns**, **verbs**, **pronouns**, **adjectives**, **adverbs**, **prepositions**, and **conjunctions**.

Building Blocks: Nouns and Verbs

These are the essential parts that are necessary for every sentence to make sense. There are really only two of these – nouns and verbs – but it's easiest to talk about pronouns at the same time.

- **Nouns** are people, places, things, and ideas. They describe who or what is doing something or in a state or being, or they might describe who or what is receiving an action. More simply, *nouns tell the reader who is acting or being acted upon*. Some examples of nouns are *car*, *dog*, and *person*. Nouns can also be a name, such as *Jane* or *Tutor.com*.
- **Verbs** convey action or state of being. In other words, *verbs are the thing that the noun is doing or that is being done to a noun*. Some examples of verbs are *do*, *want*, *am*, *give*, and *jump*.
- **Pronouns** replace nouns to make writing more interesting and concise. Because they replace nouns, *pronouns basically function in a similar way and do the same jobs as nouns*. Some of the most common pronouns are *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, *we*, *us*, *me*, *him*, *her*, and *them*.

Adding More Detail: Adjectives and Adverbs

Sentences would be boring if they were all only two or three words long. To make writing more interesting and more accurate, we often use adjectives and adverbs to add more detail. These are called **modifiers** because they modify, or add more information about, other words in a sentence.

- **Adjectives** provide more information about nouns and pronouns; they describe *something or someone*. They normally answer the questions, *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many*. Some examples of adjectives are descriptive words like *big*, *small*, *blue*, *pretty*, or *plain*. Adjectives can also be *numbers*, articles (*a/an/the*) or words that indicate possession, such as *my* or *their*.
- **Adverbs** provide more information about verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Most often, they provide information about location, time, circumstance, manner, cause, and degree. They normally answer the questions *when*, *where*, *how* and *to what degree*. Some adverbs are *quickly*, *frequently*, *tomorrow*, *soon*, *here*, and *sometimes*.

Linking Ideas Together: Prepositions and Conjunctions

We use prepositions and conjunctions to link different ideas together in a sentence.

- **Prepositions** express a relationship of *space*, *time*, or *location between a noun and another word in a sentence*. They always start a **prepositional phrase**, which is a phrase that consists of a preposition and an *object of a preposition*, which is the noun that the preposition is providing more information about. Some prepositions are *of*, *for*, *about*, *between*, and *with*. Examples of prepositional phrases might be *for the dog*, *with my friend*, or *in the book*.
- **Conjunctions** are words that connect words, phrases, or clauses together within the same sentence. They express how two words or ideas are related to each other. There are three general relationships that conjunctions show: *two ideas that are of equal importance*, *two ideas where one idea is dependent upon the other*, or *a cause and effect relationship*. Some conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *but*, *because*, *however*, and *then*.