Parts of Speech

The Center

What are the parts of speech?

In English, there are eight major parts of speech. Each is named based on its use and function in a sentence.

Below you will find a description of each of the parts of speech.

Nouns
A noun is a person, place, thing, or concept. There are seven types of nouns.

Proper: A proper noun refers to a specific name or place and always utilize capital letters. Some examples are: Midtown Hospital, O.D. Wyatt High School.

Common: A common noun is a generic noun that does not name something specific. Some examples are: hospital, high school, airport.

Concrete: Concrete nouns are those you can experience directly through the five senses, sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch. Some examples are: dirt, desk, table, tree, bird, cotton.

She sat in the tree.
The bird flew away.

Abstract: Abstract nouns cannot be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or touched. Instead, they express feelings, states of being, ideas, or qualities. Here are some examples: happiness, boredom, honor, creativity.

She is honorable.
The bird is beautiful.

Count: Count nouns refer to any noun that is countable and has either a singular or plural form. To make count nouns plural, add an -s. Here are some examples: Shoe, shoes, kitten, kittens, apple, apples, iPad, iPads.
Non-count: Non-count nouns cannot be counted and do not take an –s to make them plural. Here are some examples: rice, corn, flour.

To make non-count nouns “countable,” another quantity word must be added. Here are some examples: cup of rice, two cups of rice, bushel of corn, two bushels of corn, pound of flour, six pounds of flour.

Collective: Collective nouns refer to groups of nouns, such as animals, people, or things. Here are some examples: murder (a group of crows), faculty (a group of teachers), stuff (a group of random things).

*For more specific information on nouns, see our Nouns handout.

**Pronouns**

A pronoun is a replacement for a specific noun. There are six categories of pronouns: personal, indefinite, demonstrative, relative, and interrogative. Here are some examples.

Personal: I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours, they, them, their, theirs, he, him, his, she, her, her, hers, you, you, your, yours, it, it, its

Indefinite: all, any, anybody, anyone, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, one, several, some, somebody, someone, everything, most, nothing, anything

Demonstrative: this, that, these, those

Relative: who, whoever, which, whichever, what, whatever, that, whose, whom, whomever

Interrogative: who, which, what, whose, whom

Here are some example sentences showing the noun and the pronoun that replaced it.

Amy was out of food. She needed to go to the store.

*Molly and Mike* are always arguing. They need to break up.

*For more specific information on pronouns, see our Pronouns handout.*
**Verbs**
A verb shows the physical or mental action or state of being of the subject in a sentence.

Here are some physical or mental action verbs: grab, shake, concentrate.

I put my headphones on my ears. (Physical action)
I concentrate best with my headphones on. (Mental action)
I grab my bag when going to class. (Physical action)
I feel sad at the loss of my dog. (Mental action)

Here are some state of being verbs: am, is, are, was, were.

I am intelligent.
She is a smart person.
We are lovers of hip hop.

**Adverbs**
An adverb describes a verb to make it more specific. There are four types of adverbs:

**Adverb of Manner:** Refers to how something happens or how an action is done.
Example: April ran slowly.
The word “slowly” tells how April runs.

**Adverb of Time:** States “when” something happens or “when” it is done.
Example: He left yesterday.
The word “yesterday” tells when he left.

**Adverb of Place:** Tells something about “where” something happens or "where" something is done.
Example: Of course, I looked everywhere!
The adverb “everywhere” tells where I “looked.”

**Adverb of Degree:** States the intensity or the degree to which a specific thing happens or is done.
Example: The woman is very talented.
The italicized adverb answers the question, “To what degree is the woman talented?”
**Adjectives**
An adjective describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives can make more specific the size, shape, quantity, or color of nouns. Here are some examples: blue, huge, square, round, massive.

The earrings are blue.
He has two huge dogs.
The massive coffee table is square.

**Conjunctions**
A conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses together. There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. (FANBOYS)

**Prepositions**
A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between two or more words. They are used to show time, location, and spatial relationships. Here are some examples: in, on, around, through, at, since, for.

A prepositional phrase begins with the first preposition in the sentence and ends with the object or noun of the phrase. For example, “Bill sat at the table while eating.”

*For more specific guidance with prepositions, please see our Prepositions handout.

**Interjections**
An interjection refers to words which express emotions. Since interjections are commonly used to convey strong emotions, they are usually followed by an exclamation point. Here are some examples: Oh! Yikes! Wow! Ouch!

If you need further guidance with a specific part of speech, many of the above have additional and more in-depth handouts. Please check the handout rack or ask a member of the super team to help you!