

Eight Parts of Speech

Reviewing the basic parts of speech will help you avoid run-ons and sentence fragments, understand the relationships between words, and create more complex sentences. See *A Writer's Reference* for further information and examples.

NOUNS refer to a person, place, thing, or concept. A complete sentence requires a subject (which is always a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (which is a main verb plus any other modifiers).

→ Proper nouns are always capitalized.

- *Ms. Mercado* began working at the *Writing Center* in *Bryan, Texas*, last *June*.

→ Possessive nouns indicate ownership and require an apostrophe. Be careful with your apostrophe placement, or you might change the meaning of your sentence!

- The *student's* papers are due on Monday. [Describes one student with multiple papers]
- The *students'* papers are due on Monday. [Describes multiple students who each have at least one paper]

PRONOUNS replace a noun or act as a substitute (or antecedent) for a specific noun.

→ A pronoun should always agree with its antecedent.

- *She* walked to the library to return *her* book.
- The *librarians*, who were passionate about reading and research alike, were eager to share *their* knowledge about the author.

→ First- or second-person pronouns (I, me, my, we, us, our, you, your) are generally discouraged in academic writing.

VERBS describe an action or a state of being.

→ Main verbs can change form to create tense, especially when combined with the helping verbs *have*, *do*, and *be*.

The following table lists conjugations for three common verbs:

BASE	PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE
<i>try</i>	<i>tries</i>	<i>tried</i>	<i>have tried</i>	<i>am trying</i>
<i>eat</i>	<i>eats</i>	<i>ate</i>	<i>have eaten</i>	<i>are eating</i>
<i>be</i>	<i>am/is/are</i>	<i>was/were</i>	<i>been</i>	<i>being</i>

→ Verbs may be active or passive. Verbs in active voice express meaning more powerfully than verbs in passive voice. Passive verbs are weaker because their subjects receive rather than do the action.

- *The dog bit the boy.* [Active: The dog is the subject and does the action.]
- *The boy was bitten by the dog.* [Passive: The boy is the subject and receives the dog's action.]

→ Some verbs that end in –ing actually function as nouns. These verbs are called gerunds.

- *Driving* in the rain is dangerous.

ADJECTIVES modify nouns and pronouns. Adjectives may answer one of the following questions: *Which one? What kind of? How many?*

- Articles (a, an, the) are adjectives.
- Some pronouns (all, her, his, its, my, their, this, your) can also be adjectives.
 - Your sister came into the grocery store today. [*Your* modifies *sister*; *the* and *grocery* modify *store*.]

ADVERBS modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Adverbs may answer one of the following questions: *When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? To what degree?*

- I looked carefully for the next puzzle piece. [*How/under what conditions* did I look?]
- Are you going out of town next week? [*When* are you going?]

PREPOSITIONS usually occur before a noun or pronoun to form a prepositional phrase, or a phrase that modifies another word in the sentence. Prepositional phrases often act as adjectives or adverbs.

- She planted flowers in her garden. [*In her garden* modifies *planted*.]
- After the storm, the field next to the house was dotted with muddy puddles. [*After the storm* and *with muddy puddles* modify *was dotted*; *next to the house* modifies *field*.]

CONJUNCTIONS connect thoughts by joining words, phrases, or clauses.

- Coordinating conjunctions can fix run-on sentences by connecting grammatically equal elements such as noun phrases or independent clauses. Remember these conjunctions with the acronym FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
 - Edgar Allan Poe was an accomplished poet, and he also wrote popular short stories.
- Correlative conjunctions (either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, whether/or, both/and) come in pairs; like coordinating conjunctions, they connect grammatically equal elements.
 - Neither rain nor snow will stop the mail from being delivered.
- Conjunctive adverbs (finally, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, similarly, then, therefore) can either begin an independent clause or connect independent clauses when preceded by a semicolon.
 - Finally, it was lunchtime.
 - Texas has famously hot summers; however, its winters are surprisingly cold.

INTERJECTIONS express emotion or surprise and are followed by one exclamation mark.

- Interjections are not generally used in formal writing.
 - Wow! I passed the exam!