

THE EIGHT PARTS OF SPEECH

LIST WITH DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

All words may be classified into eight groups called parts of speech. The group to which a word belongs is determined by its use in the sentence; therefore, the same word may be any one of several parts of speech, depending upon its use in a given sentence. The eight parts of speech are **noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection**.

NOUNS

A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, idea, or quality:

Robert Frost wrote poems.

Ann lives in Boston.

Work brings satisfaction.

People like admiration.

A noun is used as the subject, as any kind of object, and as the predicate nominative (noun complement).

The man walked down the *street*. (*Man is the subject, and street is the object of the preposition down.*)

The *cow* is a domestic *animal*. (*Cow is the subject, and animal is the predicate nominative.*)

Nouns answer these questions: **Who? What?**

PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word used to take the place of a noun. A pronoun is used as a noun.

Through use of pronouns, one may avoid repeating name words:

Mary has lost *her* book.

The box has lost *its* handle.

Ruth saw the boys and talked to *them*.

VERBS

A verb is a word used to express action, being, or state of being:

Jose *Painted* a picture.

The law still *exists*.

That woman *is* a banker.

A verb may be composed of several words (the main verb preceded by one or more auxiliary or helping verbs), called a verb phrase:

This book *should have been sent* to the storeroom.

ADJECTIVES

An adjective is used to modify a noun or a pronoun. An adjective may be a single word, a phrase, or a clause:

We saw *beautiful* valleys and *rugged* mountains. (*single words*)
The rug *on the floor* is blue. (*adjective phrase*)
The man *who spoke* is a teacher. (*adjective clause*)

Adjectives answer these questions: **What kind? Which one(s)? How many (or how much)? Whose?**

ADVERBS

An adverb is used to modify a *verb*, an *adjective*, or another *adverb*. In some cases adverbs may modify other parts of speech – a preposition or a conjunction – or other sentence elements – a verbal or occasionally a substantive:

She sings *beautifully*. (*beautifully* modifies the verb *sings*.)
He is a *very great* orator. (*very* modifies the adjective *great*.)
She smiled *rather* sadly. (*rather* modifies the adverb *sadly*.)
By working *faithfully*, she won success. (*faithfully* modifies the gerund *working*.)
The little boy, smiling happily, *ran to meet his father*. (*happily* modifies the participle *smiling*.)
She has learned to write *clearly*. (*clearly* modifies the infinitive *to write*.)
He was *almost* under the tree. (*almost* modifies the preposition *under*.)
She came *just* before I left. (*Just* modifies the conjunction *before*.)
Nearly all of them were lost. (*nearly* modifies the indefinite pronoun *all*.)
The *newly* rich were not invited. (*Newly* modifies the noun equivalent *rich*.)

An adverb may be a single word, a phrase, or a clause:

He crept *stealthily*. (*single words*)
The stranger came *into the room*. (*adverbial phrase*)
Robert left *when I came*. (*adverbial clause*)

Adverbs answer these questions: **How? When? Where? Why? Under what condition? To what extent or degree?**

PREPOSITIONS

A preposition shows the relations between its object and some other word in the sentence:

We walked *through* the woods. (*through* shows the nature of the relations between *woods*, its object, and *walked*, the verb.)

CONJUNCTIONS

A conjunction connects words or groups of words:

Bob and Linda are here. (*and* connects the two subjects, *Bob and Linda*.)
She came, but she did not stay. (*but* connects the two independent clauses, *she came and she did not stay*.)

In form a conjunction may be a single word or a group of words:

She came while you were away. (a single word connecting clauses)

The teachers as well as the students had a good time. (a group of words used as a conjunction)

Although conjunctions have many classifications, it is sufficient for our purpose to note only three general classes: coordinating, subordinating, and correlative. (relative adverbs used as conjunctions are also called conjunctive adverbs or adverbial conjunctions.)

A coordinating conjunction connects two words, two phrases, or two clauses of equal rank:

Paula and Carl are here. (and connects two nouns)

She liked to read but not to write (not writing). (but connects two infinitives.)

The coordinating conjunctions in most general use include **and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet**. The conjunctive adverbs, such as **however, then, therefore, and thus**, also connect independent clauses.

A subordinating conjunction connects two clauses of unequal rank; that is, it joins a dependent (subordinate) clause to the independent clause on which it depends:

I was here before you came.

Some of the subordinating conjunctions are **as, as if, because, before, if, since, that, till, unless, when, where, and whether**. The relative pronouns **who, whom, whose, which, what, and that** also serve as subordinating conjunctions.

Conjunctions that are used in pairs are called correlative conjunctions and include **both – and, either – or, neither – nor, and not only – but also**.

Neither John nor I will be able to come.

INTERJECTIONS

An interjection is a familiar word that has no grammatical relation to the rest of the sentence and that commands attention or expresses strong feeling: ah, gosh, hurrah, oh, ouch, shh, whew, etc.

Note that an interjection is not the same thing as an exclamation. An exclamation is an outburst—an emphatic statement, not a part of speech. Though in fact an exclamation may consist of or contain an interjection, there's no necessary tie between the two. "O Henrietta Tittle, your hair is like peanut brittle" contains an interjection (the poetical "O"), but it isn't an exclamation; drop dead! Is an exclamation, but it contains only an imperative verb and an adjective.

Strong interjections are followed by an exclamation point. When used in sentences, mild interjections are set off by commas.