

# What Are the ^ Parts of Speech in English Grammar?

Traditional Terms for the Basic Word Classes in English

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Many words in the English language can function as more than one part of speech. The word *work*, for instance, can do the job of a noun, a verb, and an adjective (but not at the same time). (Serkan Ismail/ EyeEm/Getty Images)

*One way to begin studying basic sentence structures in English is to identify the traditional parts of speech (also known as word classes). These have been called the "building blocks" of grammar. Here you'll learn the names and basic functions of these eight sentence parts.*

Learning the names of the parts of speech probably won't make you witty, wealthy, or wise. In fact, learning just the *names* of the parts of speech won't even make you a better writer. But you will gain a basic understanding of the English language, which should help you follow the other lessons here at About.com Grammar and Composition. And those lessons *will* help you to improve your writing.

As you study the table at the bottom of the page, keep in mind that only interjections ("Hooray!") have a habit of standing alone (or alongside complete sentences). The other parts of speech--nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions--come in many varieties and may appear just about anywhere in a sentence.

To know for sure what part of speech a word is, we need to look not only at the word itself but also at its meaning, position, and use in a sentence.

For example, in the first sentence below, *work* functions as a noun; in the second sentence, a verb; and in the third sentence, an adjective:

- Rayan showed up for **work** two hours late.  
[The noun *work* is the thing Bosco shows up for.]
- He will have to **work** until midnight.  
[The verb *work* is the action he must perform.]

- His **work** permit expires next month.  
[The attributive noun (or converted adjective) *work* modifies the noun *permit*.]

Don't let this variety of meanings and uses discourage or confuse you. Keep in mind that learning the names of the basic parts of speech is just one way to understand how sentences are put together.

Now review the parts of speech listed below, and for each one see if you can provide examples of your own. (Click on the term for more detailed explanations and additional examples.) You'll grow more familiar with the parts of speech as you practice using them in other lessons on this site, such as [Grammar Basics: Sentence Parts and Sentence Structures](#). *NOTE:* Though some traditional grammars have treated articles (*the, a[n]*) as a distinct part of speech, contemporary grammars more often include articles in the category of determiners.

## Parts of Speech

PART OF SPEECH	BASIC FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<u>noun</u>	names a person, place, or thing	<i>pirate, Caribbean, ship, freedom, Captain Jack Sparrow</i>
<u>pronoun</u>	takes the place of a noun	<i>I, you, he, she, it, ours, them, who, which, anybody, ourselves</i>
<u>verb</u>	identifies action or state of being	<i>sing, dance, believe, seem, finish, eat, drink, be, become</i>
<u>adjective</u>	modifies a noun	<i>hot, lazy, funny, unique, bright, beautiful, healthy, wealthy, wise</i>
<u>adverb</u>	modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb	<i>softly, lazily, often, only, hopefully, softly, sometimes</i>
<u>preposition</u>	shows a relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and other words in a sentence	<i>up, over, against, by, for, into, close to, out of, apart from</i>
<u>conjunction</u>	joins words, phrases, and clauses	<i>and, but, or, yet</i>
<u>interjection</u>	expresses emotion and can usually stand alone	<i>ah, whoops, ouch, !</i>

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