

Three Tests of the Open-class Words

If you feel uncertain about the POS of a lexical word, apply the following three tests to help you decide:

→ A. **Semantic test:** the meaning a word conveys

→ B. **Morphological test:** the forms a word (prefixes, root, suffixes)

→ C. **Syntactic test:** syntactic/grammatical roles a word plays in larger grammatical units (phrase or clause)

	Semantic Test	Morphological Test	Syntactic Test
Nouns	<p>A. Concrete nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - people - place - objects - substances <p>B. Abstract nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emotions - qualities - states - attributes 	<p>A. Countable nouns can take the plural inflectional suffix -s e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • book, books; tree, trees <p>B. Most nouns have genitive forms -'s</p> <p>e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abram's book; • my neighbor's trees, • the front of the house 	<p>A. Can fit into the sentence frame: [The] ____ seems all right.</p> <p>B. Can occur as the head of a noun phrase (NP), e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [a <u>tv</u>] • [the <u>living room</u>] • [a <u>tv</u> in the <u>living room</u>] <p>C. Can stand by themselves in elliptical sentences e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Would you like tea or coffee? • -<u>Coffee</u>, please.
Adjectives	<p>Modify nouns (describe qualities/characteristics of nouns)</p>	<p>A. Can take the comparative and superlative inflectional suffixes – er and –est e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hot, <u>hotter</u>, <u>hottest</u> <p>B. Can be complex in morphology (with adjective-making suffixes) e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>acceptable</u>, <u>forgetful</u>, <u>influential</u> <p>C. Can be compound adjectives e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • color-blind, hand-made, ice-cold 	<p>A. Can fit into one of the slots in the sentence frame: The ____ man seems very ____.</p> <p>B. Often modifies a noun e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a <u>sunny</u> day, a <u>happy</u> dog <p>C. can occur as the head of an adjectival phrase (AdjP) e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very <u>dark</u> • <u>eager</u> to help <p>D. Can also occur as the predicate in a clause e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is <u>sunny</u>.

Lexical verbs	Denote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actions - processes - states of affairs that happen or exist in time <p>Note: Auxiliary verbs are closed-class words.</p>	Can be conjugated to show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. tense (present, past) e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>speaks</u>, <u>spoke</u>; go, <u>went</u> B. aspect (simple, progressive, perfect, perfect-progressive) e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>speaking</u>, <u>spoken</u>; <u>going</u>, <u>gone</u> C. voice (active, passive) e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete vs. be completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Can fit into one of the sentence frames: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They must _____ (it). ● They must _____ good. B. Often stand independently e.g., I [<u>feed</u>] Charley before school. C. Can function as the main verb in a verb phrase (VP) e.g., I [have to <u>feed</u>] Charley before school.
Adverbs	Denote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. place (here, there, far) b. time (now, always, already) c. manner (quickly, well, fast, carefully) d. degree (almost, thoroughly, slightly) e. stance (actually, sort of, surprisingly) f. linking (thus, however) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Often derived from adjectives e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>clearly</u>, ● <u>fortunately</u> B. Some are gradable e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● soon, <u>sooner</u>, <u>soonest</u> ● fast, <u>faster</u>, <u>fastest</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Can fit into the sentence frame: <p>The man told his story _____.</p> B. Modifies verbs, adjectives, or another adverb e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● drink <u>slowly</u>, ● <u>really</u> cold, ● <u>very</u> soon C. Occur as head of adverb phrase (AdvP) e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● very <u>noisily</u>, ● more <u>slowly</u> D. can act as adverbials in a clause e.g., <u>Luckily</u>, the director is here.