

# Parts of Speech—Nouns

The Who and the What

## Overview

A noun is a word that stands for a person, place, thing, or idea. It can represent both tangible and intangible things, like activities and concepts. It can be made plural or possessive.

The noun is usually the subject discussed by the sentence. It may also be the object: that which receives the sentence's action.

## Common Noun

A common (or generic) noun conventionally names something by its category or refers to an idea. For example, a person may be called an **individual**, but never specifically by name. For nouns that are specific, see the “Proper Noun” heading.

Below are examples of common nouns, each one in **bold**:

- His **mother** made his **bed** for him.
- The **doctor** gasped; the **girl** was growing **antlers**.
- **Cars** were sliding uncontrollably across the **ice**.

Entire phrases can act collectively like a noun. The **bold** below is one such noun phrase:

- The **individual who usually greets us at the counter** must be absent today.

## Proper Noun

Unlike common nouns, which are generic, proper nouns are specific. Where a “person” refers to any person, “**Eugene**” refers to one specific person. Proper nouns are capitalized. Proper nouns include specific individuals, locations, and things (like movies or companies). Here are some examples with the proper nouns in **bold**:

- **Marticio** watched ***Iron Man 2*** with his family in **California**.
- **Eustice’s** mother sprayed his bed with **Smell-A-Way** fabric cleaner.
- **Dr. Eliza** gasped; **Marina** was growing antlers.
- The **Tree Co.** truck slid on the ice towards **Pleasant Ave**.

## Pronoun

Pronouns refer to nouns or take the place of nouns. They aren't nouns themselves. The noun a pronoun refers to is its antecedent. Pronouns can imply nouns that aren't stated.

Pronouns are generic ("it" can refer to nearly anything), so to avoid uncertainty, be clear about what they refer to. On the plus side, they reduce repetition by referring to nouns briefly and diversifying the language. Here's an example:

**Repetitive** – Isiah took Isiah's keys and used Isiah's keys to unlock Isiah's car.  
**Better** – Isiah took **his** keys and used **them** to unlock **his** car.

Here are more examples of pronouns, each one in **bold**:

- **His** mother made **his** bed for **him**.
- **She** gasped; the antlers sure had a shine to **them**.
- **He** veered the car left and **it** slid on the ice. **He** was unharmed.

## Utility

A sentence will almost always be considered incomplete without a noun or pronoun to establish the subject being discussed. There are some exceptions: when the subject is clearly implied without stating it—such as in command statements or dialogue, and in quick expressions of emotion (interjections). Here are examples:

- Hello! Sorry, please come back later. Thanks for understanding.
- Yikes! Please be careful, alright? Gotta stay safe.

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