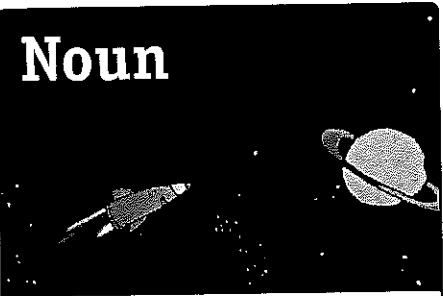


Understanding Our Language

Noun



A **noun** is a word used as the name of something: a person, a place, a thing, or an idea.

John Ulferts, uncle
Mississippi, river
"Star-Spangled Banner," song
Labor Day, holiday

KINDS OF NOUNS

439.1 Proper Noun

A **proper noun** is the name of a specific person, place, thing, or idea. Proper nouns are capitalized.

Brett Favre, *Maniac McGee*,
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame,
Cobblestone Publishing, Sunday

439.2 Common Noun

A **common noun** is any noun that does not name a specific person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns are not capitalized.

child, country, rainbow, winter,
blockhead, happiness, north

439.3 Concrete Noun

A **concrete noun** names a thing that is physical (can be touched or seen). Concrete nouns can be either proper or common.

space shuttle, *Super Nintendo*

439.4 Abstract Noun

An **abstract noun** names something you can think about but cannot see or touch. Abstract nouns can be either common or proper.

Christianity, Judaism, poverty,
satisfaction, illness, love

439.5 Collective Noun

A **collective noun** names a group or *collection* of persons, animals, places, or things.

PERSONS ... tribe, congregation,
family, class, team

ANIMALS ... flock, herd, gaggle,
clutch, litter

THINGS ... batch, cluster, bunch

Use specific nouns when you write—they add color and clarity. See page 135 for more information.

NUMBER OF NOUNS

Nouns are classified according to their number. The number of a noun tells us whether the noun is singular or plural.

440.1 Singular Noun

A **singular noun** names one person, place, thing, or idea.

boy, group, audience, stage, rock concert, hope

440.2 Plural Noun

A **plural noun** names more than one person, place, thing, or idea.

boys, groups, audiences, stages, rock concerts, hopes

For information on how to create the plural form of a number of special words, turn to 408.1-409.3.

440.3 Compound Noun

A **compound noun** is made up of two or more words.

football
[written as one word]
high school
[written as two words]
brother-in-law
[written as a hyphenated word]

GENDER OF NOUNS

Nouns have **gender**; that is, they are grouped according to sex: *feminine, masculine, neuter, and indefinite.*

Turn to page 245 for more information on using gender properly when writing.

440.4 Types of Gender

Feminine mother, sister, women, cow, hen [female]

Masculine father, men, bull, rooster [male]

Neuter . . . tree, cobweb, closet [without sex]

Indefinite president, duckling, doctor, lawyer, assistant [male or female]

USES OF NOUNS

Nouns are classified according to their use in a sentence.

440.5 Subject Nouns

A noun becomes the subject of a sentence when it does something or is being talked about.

The guidance *counselor* looked the eighth-grade student in the eye and warned him, "The high-school *principal* won't allow you to take more than one study hall."

Verb

A **verb** is a word that shows action or existence (state of being).

Tornadoes cause tremendous damage. [action]

The weather is often calm before a storm. [existence]

TYPES OF VERBS

446.1 Action Verb

An action verb tells what the subject is doing.

Natural disasters hit the globe nearly every day.

446.2 Linking Verb

A **linking verb** connects or *links* a subject to a noun or an adjective in the predicate.

I feel shaky whenever I hear about earthquakes.

[*Shakey* is a predicate adjective because it is linked by the verb *feel* to the subject *I*.]

The San Andreas Fault is an earthquake zone in California.

[*Zone* is a predicate noun because it is linked by the verb *is* to the subject *San Andreas Fault*.]

Linking Verbs

The most common linking verbs are forms of the verb *be*—**is, are, was, were, being, been, am**—and verbs such as **smell, look, taste, feel, remain, turn, appear, become, sound, seem, grow, stand**.

446.3 Helping Verb

Helping verbs *help* to form some of the tenses and voice of the main verb. (Helping verbs are also called *auxiliary verbs*.)

One thing we do know is that shooting stars are really meteors that have burned up while entering the earth's atmosphere.

Helping Verbs

The most common helping verbs are **shall, will, should, would, could, must, can, may, have, had, has, do, did**, and the forms of the verb *be*—**is, are, was, were, am, being, been**.

NUMBER OF VERBS

Verbs have **number**, which means they are singular or plural. The number of a verb depends on the number of its subject.

446.4 Singular/Plural

A singular subject needs a **singular verb**. A plural subject needs a **plural verb**.

She wonders if there is life on other planets. [singular]

They wonder if there is life on other planets. [plural]

USES OF ACTION VERBS

450.1 Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are verbs that transfer their action to an object. An object must receive the action of a transitive verb for the meaning of the verb to be complete.

The earthquake *shook* San Francisco with a fury. [*Shook* transfers its action to *San Francisco*. Without *San Francisco* the meaning of the verb *shook* is incomplete.]

San Francisco *was shaken* by the earthquake. [The subject of the sentence, *San Francisco*, receives the action of the verb, *was shaken*.]

A transitive verb throws the action directly to a **direct object** and indirectly to an **indirect object**. For a sentence to have an indirect object, it must have a direct object. A sentence can, however, have only a direct object.

Note: Direct and indirect objects are always nouns or pronouns.

Fires destroyed *San Francisco* after the 1906 earthquake.
[direct object: *San Francisco*]

Our teacher gave *us* the *details*.
[indirect object: *us*;
direct object: *details*]

See 435.8-436.1 for more about direct and indirect objects.

450.2 Intransitive Verbs

An **intransitive verb** completes its action without an object.

Her stomach *felt* queasy.
[*Queasy* is a predicate adjective; there is no direct object.]

She *looked* for a mint. [Again, there is no direct object. *Mint* is the object of the preposition *for*.]

450.3 Transitive/Intransitive

Some verbs can be either **transitive** or **intransitive**.

She *read* my note. [transitive]

She *read* aloud. [intransitive]

