

## Parts of Speech

English is what is known as an analytic language – we gain meaning from the order of the words in the sentence. Knowing the grammatical roles that individual words play in sentences can help us to decode meaning, so being familiar with the parts of speech will help you to compose clearly and concisely. Below are the seven parts of speech:

### I. Nouns

- name people, places, and things
- can be either be *concrete* (three dimensional or perceived through the senses, e.g., house) or *abstract* (qualities or concepts, measures or actions, e.g., aspect)
- can be singular (cow), plural (cows) or collective (team)
- function as subjects, objects or possessives

### II. Pronouns

- substitute for nouns
- personal pronouns have three gender possibilities: male, female or neuter
- have “cases”: subjective, objective, possessive, reflexive and emphatic
- change their form (spelling) to indicate number (singular or plural) and case
- agree with the nouns they replace in number and case
- are easy to misspell: “its/it’s”, “their/”they’re”/there” are the main two offenders

### III. Verbs

- either show action or indicate a state of being
- have different forms to show their tenses, voices and moods
- are considered the most important word in the sentence since the verb carries the action – remember this when writing your papers
- indicate actions/events that happened in the past, are occurring in the present present or are expected to happen in the future
- three levels of action: 1) show an action and takes an object that receives the action (called transitive verbs), or 2) show action but don’t have an object (called intransitive verbs), or 3) do not show action, but join the subject of the sentence with a descriptive noun or adjective (called linking or copula verbs)

### IV. Adjectives

- modify nouns and pronouns
- are used with nouns and as subject complements after linking verbs
- indicate qualities such as colour, number, size, shape
- have simple, comparative and superlative forms: *happy, happier, happiest*

## V. Adverbs

- modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs
- tell where, when, why, how or in what way something happens or is experienced
- have simple, comparative and superlative forms: *quickly, more quickly, most quickly*

## VI. Prepositions

- introduce a descriptive phrase that has a noun or pronoun as an object; prepositional phrases, therefore, are either adjectival or adverbial
- prepositional phrases usually indicate direction, placement, accompaniment
- common prepositions include: about, above, across, after, against, among, around, at, behind, below, beneath, beyond, by, despite, down, during, for, from, in, into, of, on, onto, over, since, to, toward, under, upon, until, with, without

## VII. Conjunctions

- connect words or groups of words in a sentence – they connect words of equal importance and ideas that are similar or dissimilar. Conjunctions also show contrast, emphasis and relatedness of thoughts.
- come in many types to make your writing interesting; for example, *coordinating* (and, but, so, or, for, nor, yet) join sentence elements that are grammatically equal *subordinating* (because, while, if, unless, although, as, that, etc.) start subordinate clauses that, once joined with an independent clause, create a sentence that relays more complexity of thought *adverbial* connect two independent clauses and are useful when you want to emphasize a point, contradict a point, or extend a point
- require specific marks of punctuation

And here is an add-on that sometimes is considered a part of speech. Let's call it an honorary eighth.

## Interjections

- are short words or phrases that are grammatically independent of the other words in the sentence
- have no grammatical function here; they just - yikes! - show surprise or strong feeling