GRAMMAR
by DIAGRAM
UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH GRAMMAR THROUGH
TRADITIONAL SENTENCE DIAGRAMING

Cindy L. Vitto
The Eight Parts of Speech

Words are the basic building blocks of any language. One way to begin analyzing a language, then, is to classify each word as belonging to a distinct category and to determine how the categories work together to make meaning.

Most of you are probably already familiar with the traditional way of classifying English words: the eight parts of speech. Just for fun, see if you can list all eight in the spaces below. (If you’re like most people, you’ll remember only six or seven! Check your answers by turning to the summary of Key Concepts at the end of this chapter.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

As neat and tidy as this organizational system seems, though, we must beware of assuming that each word in English can be tucked neatly into one of these categories and remain there. Part of what makes English such a dynamic language is that the same word can be used as more than one part of speech. Consider the word “water,” for example, in the following sentences:
The *water* in the birdbath was filthy. (*water* = noun)
The children *water* the sunflowers every day. (*water* = verb)
The *water* sign is Aquarius. (*water* = adjective)

In addition, linguists certainly do not agree that using the traditional eight parts of speech—based on Latin instruction from earlier centuries—is suitable for describing the English language. There is no magic to the number “eight”; indeed, some texts prefer to make two large divisions in the language, between open classes of words (those to which new words can be added—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and closed classes (pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions). Other texts might prefer to categorize words into seven, eleven, or some other number of categories.

What remains constant is that English words do fall into recognizable categories, even if experts label and group those categories differently. Those categories are defined by two qualities: *form* (the way a word looks or can be changed to look) and *function* (the way a word operates within a larger unit to help make meaning).

Although we will use the traditional eight parts of speech as our starting point, then, keep in mind that these categories are flexible. Also, by necessity you will find a number of terms in this chapter that have not yet been introduced in the text. Examples are provided to give you an inductive sense of those terms for now, and you will find them defined in more detail in later chapters. Once you have completed this text, you should (ideally) re-read this first chapter because you will then be able to make more connections between form and function, and among the various parts of speech, than you can at this point.

1. **Noun**

Asked to list the eight parts of speech, almost everyone begins with the noun—not surprising if we think of how infants begin to speak. With very limited language, they produce nouns as a way to ask for what they want and as a way to begin to make sense of the world around them. “Cup,” “milk,” and “juice” are examples of nouns that may be among the first words a baby consistently offers to the family.

*Definition of Noun*

A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.

*Categories of Nouns*

Nouns are often categorized as *abstract* (intangible entities such as justice, love, philosophy) or *concrete* (tangible entities such as house, tree, computer). Nouns are also *proper* (if individualized and therefore capitalized, such as the Declaration of Independence) or *common* (if designating membership in a generic group and therefore uncased, such as "declaration")
or “independence”). Finally, nouns are either singular or plural, leading to two additional categories: **regular** and **irregular** nouns, **countable** and **uncountable** (mass) nouns. The plurals of regular nouns end in s; irregular nouns change their form altogether to indicate a plural number: “mouse” becomes “mice,” for example. Countable (or count) nouns indicate entities that can be numbered; mass nouns indicate entities that, although understood to be plural in some sense, cannot actually be counted. For instance, we can count five cookies, but we cannot count the flour and sugar used to make the cookies—although, of course, we can measure the flour and sugar in terms of cups, since “cup” is a count noun.

**Identifying a Noun**

Nouns are often preceded by noun-markers called determiners (possessive nouns or pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, or articles). Even if the noun is not preceded by a determiner, you can insert one as a test; if the phrase makes sense, the word that follows the determiner is a noun.

- **Possessive Nouns or Pronouns**
  - John’s house
  - his house
- **Demonstrative Pronoun** (this, that, these, those)
  - that house
- **Interrogative Pronoun** (what, which, whose)
  - which house
- **Article** (a, an, the)
  - the house

This test works equally well with abstract nouns, which are sometimes the hardest to identify: her anger, this silence, the peace.

Another test, although it does not work equally well with all nouns, is to make the word either plural or possessive. “Cabinet” is a noun if you can make it plural (“cabinets”) or possessive (“the cabinet’s handle”).

A final test is to substitute a pronoun for a noun:

- Mark composed the *song*.
- He composed *it*.

**Exercise 1.1**

Underline the nouns in the following passage.

The governess insisted that the children should not be allowed to indulge their whims. She instructed the butler, Percy Shaw, to ignore the children’s complaints; as she put it, “These spoiled darlings need to learn the meaning of discipline!”

*see answer key p. 355*
2 • PRONOUN

Definition of Pronoun

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.

Categories of Pronouns

Pronouns fall into a variety of categories, beginning with the fact that we can divide pronouns as a whole into two large classes: personal pronouns (those that indicate first, second, or third person, singular or plural, with masculine, feminine, or neuter gender) and impersonal pronouns (those that do not reflect these characteristics). Nominative, objective, reflexive or intensive, and possessive pronouns fall into the category of personal pronouns; indefinite, reciprocal, interrogative, demonstrative, and relative pronouns are impersonal.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Nominative or subjective pronouns: the form used for the subject of a sentence or for the subjective complement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>She is here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE COMPLEMENT</td>
<td>Who is she?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective pronouns: the form used for the direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition. A quick method for native speakers of English to determine the objective form is to use the pronoun that naturally follows the preposition “to”: “to me,” “to her,” “to him,” “to us,” “to them.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECT OBJECT</th>
<th>Joe found it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIRECT OBJECT</td>
<td>Sally bought him a present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECT OF PREPOSITION</td>
<td>The company will do anything for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflexive or intensive pronouns: the form used to refer back to a noun or pronoun used earlier in the sentence. Reflexive pronouns are necessary for clarity of meaning; intensive pronouns are optional forms used for emphasis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFLEXIVE</th>
<th>Perry found himself alone in the room.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The children locked themselves in the bathroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| INTENSIVE | The children themselves painted this mural. (Here, “themselves” is an intensive pronoun because it is used solely for emphasis. |

These categories—nominative or subjective, objective, and reflexive or intensive—are personal pronouns because they relate to the three “persons” of English grammar, as outlined below. The fourth category of personal pronoun, the possessive, appears separately because it has more than one inflection. In other words, in addition to showing person, number, and gender,
the possessive pronoun also indicates by its form whether it is a free-standing pronoun or a determiner preceding and modifying a noun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominative or Subjective</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive or Intensive</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>myself</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>himself, hers, itself</td>
<td>themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Possessive pronouns:** the form used to show possession of a noun. Possessive pronouns have two forms, depending on whether they are acting as free-standing pronouns or as determiners before a noun. As determiners they act as adjectives because they provide more information about the noun that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun form</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>mine</td>
<td>ours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>yours</td>
<td>yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>his, hers, its</td>
<td>theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determiner form</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>your</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>his, her, its</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Her book is on the table. (determiner)
The book is hers. (possessive pronoun)
The cat licked its paw. (determiner)

Notice that "its" is the one possessive pronoun that causes problems: if you insert an apostrophe, you've created a contraction meaning "it is" or "it has"; without an apostrophe, you have the possessive form. Perhaps it will help if you remember that the pronoun "his" is possessive but never takes an apostrophe; "its" follows the same model. Personal pronouns never use an apostrophe to signal possession.

It's [It is] correct to write "its" for possession.

Another way of avoiding this problem is to remember that contractions are inappropriate anyhow in most formal writing; therefore, it is seldom appropriate to use the form "it's."

**Impersonal Pronouns**

Unlike the personal pronouns, the impersonal pronouns that follow cannot be inflected (changed) to reflect first, second, or third person; singular or plural; or masculine, feminine, or neuter. Indefinite and reciprocal pronouns can, however, be inflected to become possessive in form.

**Indefinite pronouns:** used to take the place of a noun which cannot be named specifically. The indefinite pronouns you may be most familiar with begin with "any," "some," "every," or "no":

- anyone
- anybody
- anything
- someone
- somebody
- something
- everyone
- everybody
- everything
- no one
- nobody
- nothing

Words that specify a number or amount also qualify as indefinite pronouns, such as "enough," "many," "each," "both," "none," and the cardinal numbers ("one," "two," and so on).

*Anybody* can learn the eight parts of speech.

She studied *nothing* but grammar.

*Many* of the flowers have already bloomed.

Twenty of the students gave *each* of the teachers a little *something* as a parting gift.

Indefinite pronouns can appear in possessive form:

*Someone's* car was parked in the mud.

**Reciprocal Pronouns:** indicate reciprocity, either singular ("each other") or plural ("one another").

They love *each other.*
(This sentence indicates two people in love.)

They love *one another.*
(This sentence indicates more than two people, perhaps a loving family.)

Reciprocal pronouns can also be used as determiners (adjectives) when in the possessive...
Nate and Sheena get on each other’s nerves.

In our family, we have learned to put up with one another’s foibles.

**Interrogative pronouns:** “who,” “whom,” “whose,” “which,” and “what” when used to begin a question.

*What* is the name of this object?

*Which* is the painting that you just bought?

*Whose* is this?

“Whose,” “which,” and “what” function as adjectives when they immediately precede a noun. Notice the difference between the free-standing pronouns above and the same forms used as adjectives below:

*What* object is on the table?

*Which* painting did you just buy?

*Whose* bicycle is this?

**Demonstrative pronouns:** used to point out a specific noun. There are only four demonstrative pronouns: this, that, these, those. Demonstrative pronouns are interesting because they indicate proximity in English. In the sentences below, notice that “this” and “these” indicate closeness to the speaker, while “that” and “those” indicate distance. Some dialects of English emphasize this difference by adding “this here” or “that there.”

*This* is a dirty shirt.  
*That* is a clean shirt.

*These* are dirty shirts.  
*Those* are clean shirts.

Note that demonstrative pronouns function as determiners (a category of the adjective) when they precede a noun.

*These* clothes are dirty.

(“These” is a determiner, not a pronoun, in this sentence.)

*These* are dirty.

(“These” is a demonstrative pronoun here.)

**Relative Pronouns:** begin a relative, or adjective, clause. (We will learn more about relative clauses in Chapter 5. Briefly, a relative clause is a group of words containing a subject and a verb and used to modify the noun that precedes the clause.) The relative pronouns are “who” (and its variants “whomever,” “whom,” “whomever,” and “whose”), “which,” and “that.”

The police officer *who* helped us was extremely courteous.

That piano, *which* has been in storage during the winter, needs to be tuned.

Do not trust a wild animal *that* has been caged.
Identifying a Pronoun

You will probably not have much trouble identifying pronouns if you remember that they take the place of nouns. Although with some categories of pronouns, and some sentence structures, this can become complicated, the basic test for a pronoun is to substitute a noun. If the sentence makes sense, you've found a pronoun.

**Subjective Pronoun:**   
He jogs every day.  
*(Mike jogs every day.)*

**Objective Pronoun:**   
Mary gave her a lollipop.  
*(Mary gave the child a lollipop.)*

**Reflexive or Intensive Pronoun:**   
Eleanor made herself sick with worry.  
*(Eleanor made Eleanor sick with worry.)*

**Possessive Pronoun:**   
Her mother is learning Spanish.  
*(Jenna's mother is learning Spanish.)*

**Indefinite Pronoun:**   
I doubt that anyone can do better.  
*(I doubt that George can do better.)*

**Reciprocal Pronoun:**   
The children waved good-bye to one another.  
*(The children waved good-bye to their friends.)*

**Interrogative Pronoun:**   
Whom did Steve call for advice?  
*(In this case, re-arrange the wording: Did Steve call Bill for advice?)*

**Demonstrative Pronoun:**   
I would like to buy that.  
*(I would like to buy the computer.)*

**Relative Pronoun:**   
The employees preferred a supervisor who could be objective.  
*(In this case, isolate the relative clause and substitute a noun for the relative pronoun: Melissa could be objective.)*

**EXERCISE 1.2**

Underline the pronouns in the following passage. Then see if you can take the next step and categorize each pronoun as well.

"That is not acceptable," proclaimed the schoolmaster, rocking himself emphatically back and forth on his heels. "I want to know the person who is responsible for the
greeting that you boys should have the right to determine your own grades. Who began such a crazy idea? I will assign them to you as I see fit, and anyone wishing to argue with me may do so. Grades are my prerogative, not something that you can do for one another, and the situation will remain that way.”

1. ____________________________ 2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________ 4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________ 6. ____________________________
7. ____________________________ 8. ____________________________
9. ____________________________ 10. ____________________________
11. ____________________________ 12. ____________________________
13. ____________________________ 14. ____________________________
15. ____________________________ 16. ____________________________
17. ____________________________ 18. ____________________________

see answer key p. 355

3 - VERB

Verbs are the most complex of the eight parts of speech. As you will see in the following two chapters, it is essential to identify verbs and to classify them in order to determine the function of other elements in the sentence.

The most basic classification of a verb requires us to label it as either active or passive. An active verb indicates that the subject of the sentence is performing the action; a passive verb indicates that the subject is not performing the action and is therefore “passive.” Passive verbs always consist of at least two words, a form of the be verb followed by the past participle (the verb form that would follow the auxiliary “have”).

Active    Monique threw the ball.

Passive    The ball was thrown by Monique.

We will discuss passive verbs (and passive sentences) in a later chapter. For now, the rest of our discussion on verbs is limited to active verbs.
Definition of a Verb

A verb shows either action or state of being (existence).

Categories of Verbs

By definition, verbs fall into two large categories: action or state of being (existence). These categories can be further subdivided, as illustrated below:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{ACTION VERBS} & \text{STATE OF BEING (EXISTENCE) VERBS} \\
\text{Transitive Verbs} & \text{Intransitive Verbs} & \text{Be Verbs} & \text{Linking Verbs} \\
\end{array}
\]

Action verbs fall into two categories:

1. **Transitive** verbs are followed by an object indicating who or what receives the action.

   He kicked the ball.
   She waved her hat.

2. **Intransitive** verbs are not followed by an object. A transitive verb can often serve as an intransitive verb when you simply delete the object:

   He kicked.
   She waved.
   The children ran through the yard.

State of being verbs fall into two categories:

1. **As the most irregular verb in English, be has a variety of forms:** am, is, are, was, were, being, been.

   They were happy.

For quick reference, the most common forms of the be verb are conjugated below:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{PRESENT TENSE} & \text{PAST TENSE} & \text{PERFECT ASPECT (PRESENT / PAST)} \\
I \ are & I \ was & I \ have / \ had \ been \\
you \ are & you \ were & you \ have / \ had \ been \\
h\ he, she, it \ is & he, she, it \ was & he, she, it \ has / \ had \ been \\
we \ are & we \ were & we \ have / \ had \ been \\
you \ are & you \ were & you \ have / \ had \ been \\
they \ are & they \ were & they \ have / \ had \ been \\
\end{array}
\]
2. Linking verbs can be replaced by a form of be without substantially changing the general sense of the sentence.

"They seemed happy" is basically equivalent to "They were happy."

Note that all of the verbs of sense can be used as linking verbs:

The soup tasted good.
The soup smelled good.
The soup looked good.
The soup sounded good when you suggested it.
The soup felt good on such a cold day.

The following sentences illustrate other common linking verbs:

I become sleepy around midnight.
People seem intelligent when they think before they speak.
Moments of happiness appear frequently in the life of a secure child.
Senior citizens remain valuable community members.
Leaves turn red, orange, and yellow in the fall.
The nights grow shorter before the summer solstice.

Notice that linking verbs can often function as action verbs, depending on the sentence:

The farmer grew sad as he talked about his childhood.
(linking verb because you can replace “grew” with “was”—The farmer was sad as he talked about his childhood.)

The farmer grew corn.
(transitive verb because you cannot replace “grew” with “was” and because an object follows the verb)

An essential characteristic of the be and linking verbs is that, by themselves, they cannot complete the thought of the sentence. Whenever we use a be or linking verb as the main verb of the sentence, we must follow it with an adjective that modifies the subject or with a noun or pronoun that renames the subject—hence the term "linking verb," since the verb links an adjective, noun, or pronoun to the subject. With the be verb, the element that follows may also be an adverb of time or place.

Carla is happy. (The adjective "happy" modifies Carla.)
Carla is a lifeguard. (The noun "lifeguard" renames Carla.)
Carla is here. (The adverb “here” specifies where Carla is.)

Note that it would be normally impossible to use “Carla is” as a complete sentence. Similarly, it would be impossible to use a linking verb without completing the sentence with an additional element. “Carla seems” is not a sentence, but “Carla seems happy” does express a complete thought.

**Verb Phrases**

Verbs often appear in phrases, making it more difficult to determine which category of verb you are dealing with. **When you see a verb phrase, the last word in the phrase determines whether you have an action or a state of being verb.** The last word in the verb phrase is the main verb; the other verbs, those leading up to the main verb, are called auxiliaries or helping verbs. They allow us to express various shades of meaning, including tense (when the action or existence indicated by the verb took place).

**Four types of verbs can be used as auxiliaries:**

1. **Modals** (shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, must, have to, had to, ought to)
2. **Forms of have** (has, have, had)
3. **Forms of be** (am, is, are, was, were, being, been)
4. **Forms of do** (does, do, did)

(We will discuss do separately, since it operates differently from the others.)

Note in the following sentence how a modal, a form of have, and a form of be all precede the main verb. **These auxiliaries always appear in the same order:**

**modal + have + be + main verb**

The toddler should have been eating at the table.

When faced with a verb phrase such as this one, how do we determine the category of the verb? **The main verb, not the auxiliaries, determines the category of the verb as a whole.** In the example above, “eating” is the main verb. We classify it as an action verb because it denotes action on the part of the subject (“toddler”) and is clearly not a be or linking verb. Further, it is not followed by an object. (The noun “table” is not the object of the verb but the object of the preposition “at.”) We can therefore classify “eating” as an intransitive verb, and by extension the entire verb phrase “should have been eating” is intransitive.

When faced with a verb phrase, then, you can determine how to categorize the verb by using a decision tree:

1. **Are there auxiliary or helping verbs—a modal, a form of have, and/or a form of be?** If so, eliminate these components of the verb phrase in order to locate the main verb, the last word of the verb phrase.

2. **Does the main verb show a state of being or existence?** If so, is the main verb a form of be or is it a linking verb? (Remember that the test of a linking verb is that
it can be replaced by a *be* verb without substantially changing the meaning of the sentence.)

3. If the main verb is not a *be* or linking verb, then it must be an action verb. If the verb shows action, is it intransitive (with no direct object following the verb) or is it transitive (followed by an object—a noun or pronoun that answers the question "whom?" or "what?" following the verb)?

Let's look at a few examples to see how this works:

Geraldine *has been dancing.*
"Has been dancing" is an action verb because of the final word, "dancing." You can further classify it as intransitive because no object follows the verb.

The manager *is being* unreasonable.
"Is being" is a state of being verb and belongs to the *be* category because of its final word, "being."

My sister *is feeling* happy.
"Is feeling" is a state of being verb and belongs to the linking verb category; its final word, "feeling," does not show action and the sentence could be rephrased as "My sister is happy."

My sister *is feeling* her boyfriend's biceps.
Here, "is feeling" is an action verb and *is* transitive because it is followed by an object, "biceps." It would not make sense to rephrase the sentence as "My sister is her boyfriend's biceps," so "feeling" is not used here as a linking verb.

The fourth type of auxiliary, forms of *do,* appears in special circumstances. We use this auxiliary when we phrase a question from a sentence that contains no other auxiliaries, when we make a positive statement negative, and when we want to add emphasis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT WITHOUT AUXILIARY</th>
<th>Courtney likes chocolate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION FORMATION</td>
<td>Does Courtney like chocolate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE STATEMENT</td>
<td>Courtney <em>does</em> not like chocolate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPHATIC STATEMENT</td>
<td>Courtney <em>does</em> like chocolate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that if the original sentence already contains an auxiliary ("Courtney *has* always liked chocolate"), then there is no need for the auxiliary *do* ("*Has* Courtney always liked chocolate?").

**Identifying a Verb**

If you can locate the subject of a sentence (who or what the idea of the sentence is about), you will probably be able to identify the verb—the words that indicate the subject's action or state of existence.
EXERCISE 1.3

In the sentences below, identify the italicized verbs as belonging to one of the following categories:

[A] State of being verb—be verb
[B] State of being verb—linking verb
[C] Action verb—intransitive (no object)
[D] Action verb—transitive (object follows verb)

1. I felt the torn material.
2. I felt sorry about the mistake.
3. The cadet sounded angry.
4. The cadet sounded the trumpet.
5. No one has been in the office.
6. Everyone has been looking at the waves.
7. The beach has been looking lovely.
8. The beach has an irresistible allure.
10. Because of her experience, she acts rather snobbish now.
11. The most expensive items were in a locked cabinet.
12. Two customers were waiting patiently.
13. They were buying a retirement gift for a beloved colleague.
14. They seemed nervous about making the best choice.
15. They finally selected a jeweled kaleidoscope.

see answer key p. 446
EXERCISE 1.4

Underline the verbs and verb phrases (including helping verbs) in the following passage. Then, above each verb or verb phrase, identify the type of verb by using the following symbols: [T] for transitive, [INT] for intransitive, [BE] for any form of the verb “to be,” or [L] for linking verb.

The hands of the clock were moving slowly while Gretchen walked to town. She had a serious look on her face as she approached the shop where her mother had worked for the past ten years. Today she would enter the shop for her final goodbye before she was on her way to America. As she pushed open the creaking door, she did not weep. Instead, she smiled so that she might appear happier and more confident than she actually felt.  

see answer key p. 356

4 • ADJECTIVE

Definition of Adjective

An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or a pronoun.

Categories of Adjectives

An adjective usually answers one of three questions: (1) which one? (2) how many? (3) what kind?

1. which one?

I like my car.

She wants that house.

Notice that this category, as mentioned earlier, includes words that are more properly called determiners (because their presence “determines” the presence of a noun to follow). Possessive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, and reciprocal pronouns in possessive form, when not free-standing but placed before a noun, are determiners (or adjectives).

This category also includes another subset of adjectives, the articles: a/an (the indefinite article) and the (the definite article). “A” and “an” are variants; use “an” before a word beginning with a vowel or with a silent or an unvoiced letter. Thus we would say “a historical document”
if we pronounce the initial "h," but "an herbal remedy" if we take the "h" in "herbal" to be silent. Likewise, we say "a university degree" because, even though "university" begins with a vowel, it does not begin with a vowel sound.

Sara ordered *a* cake for *the* party.
(The indefinite article indicates no particular specification of cake, but the definite article indicates a specific party.)

Sara ordered *an* anchovy pizza to be delivered in *an* hour for *a* friend of hers.
(Use "an" before words beginning with vowel sounds.)

2. **how many?**

I want *no* excuses.
She drank *three* cups of tea.
*Some* guests arrived on time.

3. **what kind?**

They chose a *purple* carpet for the *Victorian* house.

**Placement of Adjectives**

Single-word adjectives almost always occur in two slots in the sentence, either before the noun (or pronoun) being modified or after a *be* or linking verb. The adjective that follows a verb is called a **predicate adjective** or a **subjective complement**; adjectives preceding nouns are labeled attributive.

The *red* scarf is in the closet.

The scarf is *red*.

**Exercise 1.5**

Underline the adjectives in the following sentences. (You do not need to underline articles.)

The *choppy blue* waters of the normally quiet lake battered Michael's worn old boat.
As a veteran of many fierce storms, it looked both defiant and triumphant as high waves slapped against its chipped bow.

*See answer key p. 136*
5. **Adverb**

**Definition of Adverb**

An adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, as demonstrated below:

- She smiled *verb* **discreetly**.
- She is *adjective* **quite discreet**.
- She smiled *adverb* **very discreetly**.

**Categories of Adverbs**

Single-word adverbs usually answer one of three questions: (1) how? (2) when? (3) where?

1. **how? in what manner? under what condition?**

   She walked *adverb* **quickly**.
   (Notice that many adverbs in this category end with -ly. Not all words that end in -ly, though, are adverbs; “friendly,” “neighborly,” “early,” “curly,” “burly,” and “sirly,” for example, are always adjectives, even though they end in -ly.)

2. **when?**

   She walked *adverb* **yesterday**.

3. **where?**

   She walked *adverb* **downtown**.

Adverbs also take the form of larger groups of words, known as phrases and clauses. These extended adverbs, besides answering the questions above, can also answer the question “why?” or “for what purpose?”

- She walked *adverb* **to improve her health**. (infinite phrase)
- She walked *adverb* **because she enjoyed the exercise**. (adverb clause)

**Identifying an Adverb**

In many cases, one of the best ways to identify an adverb is to use the **test of movability**. If you can move the word (or phrase or clause) in question without changing the meaning of the sentence, it is **probably an adverb**.

- She walked *adverb* **quickly**.
- She *adverb* **quickly walked**.
- She walked *adverb* **yesterday**.
Yesterday she walked.
She walked to improve her health.
To improve her health, she walked.
She walked because she enjoyed the exercise.
Because she enjoyed the exercise, she walked.

As you can see, though, this test is not infallible; it won’t work with the following example:
She walked downtown.
*Downtown she walked.

(An asterisk indicates a structure that violates the grammatical rules or the idiomatic flow of English.)

**EXERCISE 1.6**

Underline the single-word adverbs in the following passage.

Sarah and Manuel sat forlornly on the porch steps. They talked very quietly as they considered what life would now be like. With their grandmother’s death, life had changed irrevocably forever, and they could not bear going inside. The eerily still rooms and the oddly vacant rocking chair would be too much for them to handle until they could somehow come to grips with the reality of her death.

*see answer key p. 356*

**6 • PREPOSITION**

*Definition of Preposition*

A preposition is a word that relates a noun or pronoun to the rest of the sentence. The noun or pronoun is known as the **object of the preposition**.

Consider the following sentence:

I walked ____ the door.

Unless we fill in the blank with a preposition, the sentence simply does not make sense. But once we insert a preposition, many spatial possibilities can be expressed. Here are just a few:

I walked **through** the door.

**into**

**behind**
Prepositions can also express concepts of time and of condition:

The child fell asleep during the intermission.
Paulette married Pierre despite his quick temper.

Sometimes, rather than a single-word preposition, a prepositional idea is expressed in an idiomatic phrase of two or three words, followed by the object:

According to Paulette’s mother, Pierre has a quick temper.
On account of his temper, Pierre has been out of work.

Categories of Prepositions

Every prepositional phrase, once identified, acts as either an adjective or an adverb.
When you are looking for the subject and verb of a sentence, then, it helps if you first identify and then eliminate the prepositional phrases. In almost all cases, they merely distract you from finding the essential information contained within a sentence.

The mural on the wall is grotesque.

In this case, the prepositional phrase is an adjective, even though it may initially seem to be an adverb because in a sense it indicates where the mural is. Here the primary purpose of the prepositional phrase is to indicate which mural is grotesque. If you can locate the subject and verb of this sentence—“mural is”—you’ll notice that the prepositional phrase separates them. When you see this pattern of subject, prepositional phrase, and verb, the prepositional phrase is almost always an adjective modifying the subject.

We hung the picture on the bedroom wall.

Here the prepositional phrase acts as an adverb because it indicates where the picture was hung, not which picture. Notice that the prepositional phrase could also appear at the beginning of the sentence without changing meaning; remember that adverbs are movable but adjectives are not.

The boys drew graffiti on the wall.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase could be either an adjective, specifying which graffiti, or an adverb, explaining where the boys drew. Out of context of surrounding sentences, it is impossible to determine if this prepositional phrase is functioning as an adjective or an adverb. The sentence could be rephrased, though, to clarify the function of the prepositional phrase:

Although we did not know who had drawn the graffiti on the sidewalk, we knew that the boys had drawn the graffiti on the wall.
(Here the prepositional phrase serves as an adjective to distinguish the graffiti on the sidewalk from the graffiti on the wall.)
After considering the best location for their message, the boys decided to draw the graffiti on the wall. (Here the prepositional phrase serves as an adverb to specify where the graffiti had been placed.)

**Identifying a Prepositional Phrase**

Remember that prepositions do not occur in isolation but as part of a phrase. When you see a word expressing time, location, or condition that is followed by a noun or a pronoun, you have a prepositional phrase. Most prepositions are short words, as you’ll see from the list of common prepositions below. In addition, since the majority of prepositions indicate spatial location, you can generate a representative list for yourself by choosing a noun as object and placing prepositions before it: in the cloud, under the cloud, over the cloud, through the cloud, within the cloud, on the cloud, below the cloud, across the cloud, beyond the cloud, on top of the cloud, next to the cloud, beside the cloud, past the cloud, and so on.

### A List of Common Prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>about</th>
<th>behind</th>
<th>for</th>
<th>since</th>
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<td>below</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>through</td>
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<td>according to</td>
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<td>in</td>
<td>throughout</td>
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<td>across</td>
<td>beside</td>
<td>instead of</td>
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<td>like</td>
<td>under</td>
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<tr>
<td>along</td>
<td>but (when it means “except”)</td>
<td>near</td>
<td>until</td>
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**Placement of Prepositions**

Common wisdom is that a sentence should not end with a preposition, and this is usually true (especially when the preposition is unnecessary, as in “Where are you at?”). On the other hand, it is better to end with a preposition than to contort a sentence. Winston Churchill has left his mark on this grammatical issue. When a civil servant revised one of Churchill’s sentences to eliminate a preposition at the end, Churchill reportedly responded, “This is the sort of English up with which I will not put.”
EXERCISE 1.7

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following passage. Then identify each prepositional phrase by writing above it either [ADJ] for a prepositional phrase used as an adjective or [ADV] for a prepositional phrase used as an adverb.

The barking dog chased the frantic squirrel around the house and under a bush. It was a scene of pathetic comedy. For several moments the squirrel’s escape seemed hopeless, but fortune suddenly reversed itself. The dog collapsed in exhaustion, and we breathed a sigh of relief.

see answer key p. 357

EXERCISE 1.8

The following sentences end with a preposition. Rewrite each sentence so that the preposition appears earlier in the sentence, remembering to remove the preposition from the end when you do so. Do any of the sentences sound smoother in the original version, with the preposition at the end?

1. Dylan is the one that Luigi always seeks advice from.

2. Animal rights is an issue I care deeply about.

3. Which flavor of ice cream are you going to ask for?

4. Rochester is the man Jane Eyre fell in love with.

see answer key p. 357
7 • CONJUNCTION

Definition of a Conjunction

A conjunction is a word that connects words, phrases (groups of words that do not contain both a subject and a verb), or clauses (groups of words that do contain subjects and verbs). Three conjunctions you are likely to recognize are and, but, and or.

Helen and Mary are close friends.

The confused cat sped through the door but stopped in the hallway.

You can memorize the eight parts of speech, or you can struggle throughout the rest of this course.

Categories of Conjunctions

Conjunctions come in many varieties, and we’ll take them up in more detail later. For now, here’s a quick overview:

1. Coordinating conjunctions: If you remember the acronym FANBOYS, you can easily memorize all of the coordinating conjunctions:

   for (meaning “because”) and nor but
   or yet so

   The Jones family has visited London, so this year they are traveling to Munich.

2. Subordinating conjunctions: These conjunctions join an adverb clause to the main clause of a sentence. Although the list that follows is not complete, here are some of the most common subordinating conjunctions:

   after if until
   although once when, whenever
   as since where, wherever
   because so that while
   before unless whereas

   You may notice that several of the subordinating conjunctions can also be found in the list of common prepositions. When followed by a noun as object, the word is a preposition; when followed by a subject and verb, the word is a subordinating conjunction. Occasionally the same word can function as an adverb as well. In the sentences below, all of the italicized structures impart the same sense of “when,” but the grammatical structure of each one differs.

   Before the game, we placed bets on the winner.
   (Before is used here as a preposition because it is followed by an object, “game.” The prepositional phrase as a whole serves as an adverb.)

   Before the game began, we placed bets on the winner.
(Before is used here as a subordinating conjunction, preceding the subject-verb unit of “game began.”)

We had never seen such a game before.

(Before is used here as an adverb answering the question “when.”)

3. Correlative conjunctions: These conjunctions occur in pairs: both/and, either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, and whether/or.

Neither the steaks on the grill nor the chicken in the oven looked appetizing.

4. Conjunctive adverbs: These “hybrids” are adverbs that do the work of conjunctions by following a semicolon that joins two complete sentences. Whereas the semicolon indicates the joining of the two sentences into one, the conjunctive adverb expresses the logical relationship between the ideas of the two sentences. Some of the most common conjunctive adverbs are words often labeled as “transitions” in writing courses:

also       indeed       on the other hand
consequently   instead     then
furthermore       meanwhile      therefore
however         moreover      thus
in conclusion       nevertheless       

Kristina has studied grammar for several years; therefore, she should become an excellent copy-editor.

We will encounter conjunctive adverbs in more detail in Chapter 4.

**EXERCISE 1.9**

Underline and identify the conjunctions in the passage below.

Although Lady Grimshaw offered us both tea and coffee, we refused to take advantage of her hospitality, for the hour was late; however, we agreed to return within a few days.

1. ______________________________________ 3. ______________________________
2. ______________________________________ 4. ________________________________

*see answer key p. 357*
8 • INTERJECTION

Definition of an Interjection

An interjection is a word used to express emotion, either at a low, moderate, or high level. The interjection is probably the least used part of speech, at least in writing. It is often difficult to determine if an interjection is part of a sentence or if it constitutes a sentence on its own.

Well, you’re wrong again.

Wow! What a car!

Because the interjection does not perform an essential grammatical function but instead is used to add extra “flavor” to a sentence, we will not need to discuss it further within the scope of this book.
SUMMARY OF KEY CONCEPTS IN CHAPTER 1

As traditionally defined, there are eight parts of speech:

1. **Noun**
   - person, place, thing, or idea
   - tests: can be made plural or possessive
   - can substitute a pronoun for a noun

2. **Pronoun**
   - takes the place of a noun
   - categories: personal (nominative or subjective, objective, reflexive or intensive, possessive)
   - impersonal (indefinite, reciprocal, interrogative, demonstrative, relative)

3. **Verb**
   - shows either action (transitive or intransitive) or state of being (be verb or linking verb) of the subject of the sentence or clause
   - last verb in a verb phrase determines whether verb is an action or state of being verb; may be preceded by a modal, and/or a form of have, and/or a form of be, or a form of do.

4. **Adjective**
   - modifies a noun or pronoun
   - answers (1) which one? (2) how many? (3) what kind?

5. **Adverb**
   - modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb
   - answers (1) how? in what manner? under what condition? (2) when? (3) where?
   - can often move within a sentence without changing meaning; adverbs that answer the question “how?” often end in -ly

6. **Preposition**
   - relates a noun or pronoun (the object of the preposition) to the rest of the sentence; every prepositional phrase acts as either an adjective or an adverb

7. **Conjunction**
   - connects words, phrases, or clauses
   - categories: coordinating, subordinating, correlative, conjunctive adverbs

8. **Interjection**
   - expresses emotion
CHAPTER 1 EXERCISE

I. Label each word in the passage below as a part of speech. Use the following abbreviations:

[N] noun
[P] pronoun
VERB: [V-T] transitive verb
[V-INT] intransitive verb
[V-BE] be verb
[V-L] linking verb

[ADJ] adjective
[ADV] adverb
[PREP] preposition
[CONJ] conjunction
[INTER] interjection

A strangely familiar portrait faced me during my dinner at the ancestral estate. Because I am not usually superstitious, I was surprised by the effect of that experience. Oh, that portrait gave me nightmares for days, but they finally stopped when I investigated the history of the house and its owner. The subject of the portrait, it seems, was an ancestor of mine and had fallen to a grisly death in the previous century.

This type of exercise, common in schoolrooms through the early twentieth century, is known as “parsing.” This is the last time you will be directed to parse sentences; instead, you’ll learn to identify the most important words in the sentence and categorize them by function (subject, object, etc.). In addition, you’ll learn to diagram sentences in order to illustrate spatially the relationship of each word to other words in the sentence.

II. In the sentences below, indicate the part of speech of each italicized word. Be able to explain how you determined your answer.

1. Every student needs to buy the required book for this course.

2. We asked the travel agent if she could book us on the next flight to Baltimore.
3. The *book* value of the classic car was astounding.

4. The guide instructed us to look *up*.

5. Please do not *up* the price of this car.

6. We saw the flashing lights of an ambulance *up* the street.

7. The town has been steadily growing *since* last summer.

8. The town has been steadily growing *since* the economy has boomed.

III. Write a sentence that includes at least six of the eight parts of speech. Once you have done this, can you meet the ultimate challenge, writing a sentence with all eight parts of speech included?

*see answer key p. 357*