

## Eight Principal Parts of Speech

**Noun.** A word that names a person, place or thing. Grammatically, nouns are used in many ways, chiefly as subjects, objects and predicate nouns.

**Pronoun.** A word that replaces a noun. Another definition might read “a way to identify a person, place or thing without naming it.” Pronouns have a rich variety: personal pronouns, relative pronouns, reflexive, interrogative, demonstrative and indefinite. An aspect of pronouns that has become difficult to master for American English speakers is case. Most pronouns decline for subject, object, and possessive case and should be used accordingly.

**Verb.** A word (or words in the case of verbs with auxiliaries) that makes a statement about the subject of a clause. Most verbs in English describe actions; they are action verbs. Linking verbs, less prevalent than action verbs but used with great frequency, are the second class of verbs. Linking verbs – verbs that show a state of being – do not describe actions; it may be helpful to think of them as grammatical equal signs.

**Adjective.** An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun. Certain phrases and clauses can function adjectivally, working as units to modify nouns and pronouns.

**Adverb.** An adverb is a word that modifies a verb, adjective, other adverbs, and sometimes entire sentences. Certain phrases and clauses can function adverbially, working as units to modify verbs, adjective or adverbs, etc.

**Preposition.** A preposition is a word (often small, often ditzzy, although not always) that connects a noun or pronoun, which is the object of the preposition, to another word in the sentence, providing additional meaning. Prepositions frequently relate to place or time (consider *in*, *at*, *by*, *near*, *on*, *in*).

*The cat (in the house).* Here the preposition is *in*; the object of *in* is *house*; both connect to *cat*. You see the added meaning by contrasting *cat house* with *cat in the house*.

**Conjunction.** A conjunction is a word that connects. Coordinating conjunctions (think of *and* or *but*) join equivalent grammatical units: words, phrases or clauses. Subordinating conjunctions introduce a type of dependent clause called subordinate clauses.

**Interjection.** A word, usually at the opening of a sentence, that is clearly part of the sentence meaning, but is grammatically unrelated to other words in the sentence.