

GOODNESS GRACIOUS GRAMMAR





GETTING STARTED

You use grammar every time you read or write or speak. Grammar gives you all the rules about how to put words together in sentences. Using correct grammar helps other people understand what you mean.

You can make short, sharp sentences, like this:

“Get lost,” she snapped.

You can be poetic:

The crafty creature slowly crept; the terrified child shivered and wept...

And you can inform:

The two-toed sloth is a tree-dwelling tropical mammal not noted for its speed.

Extra Information

Grammar Extra. Throughout this section, you'll find Grammar Extras that give you more detail on the subject you have just read about—these will really help you impress your teachers!

Grammar Guidance. These will give you useful tips and suggestions that will come in handy when you put grammar into practice.

Did You Know? Finally, you'll find additional information under the Did You Know? headings—interesting stuff ranging from the weird to the wonderful.

THE PARTS OF SPEECH



Every type of word in a sentence has a name, and these names are known as the parts of speech. This poem gives you a handy reminder of each of them:

Every name is called a **noun**,
As field and fountain, street and town.

In place of noun the **pronoun** stands,
As he and she can clap their hands.

The **adjective** describes a thing,
As magic wand and bridal ring.

The **verb** means action, something done—
To read, to write, to jump, to run.

How things are done, the **adverbs** tell,
As quickly, slowly, badly, well.

The **preposition** shows relation,
As in the street, or at the station.

Conjunctions join, in many ways,
Sentences, words, or phrase and phrase.

The **interjection** cries out, "Hark!
I need an exclamation mark!"

Through poetry, we learn how each
Of these make up the **parts of speech**.

The information on the following pages tells you more about these parts of speech.



HOW ABOUT NOUNS?

A noun is a name for a thing, a person, or a place. Words such as bus, chair, dragon firework, hosepipe, maggot, octopus, teacher, and tree are all nouns.

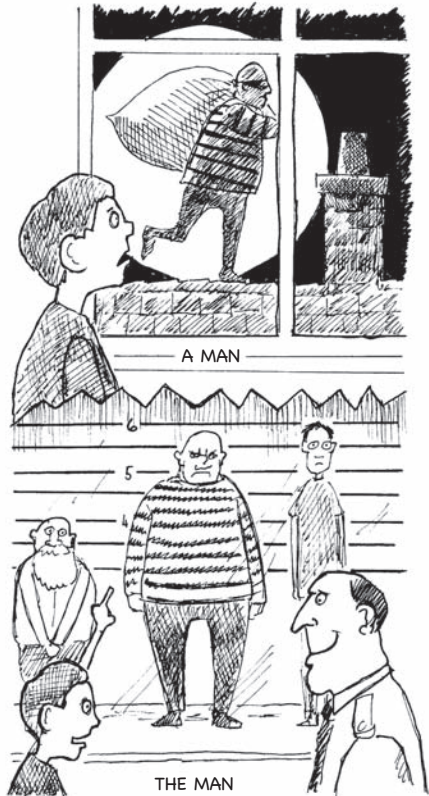
Common Nouns

There are different types of nouns, and the easiest type to spot are called common nouns. These are names for ordinary things, such as a book, a box, or a button. They are also names for less ordinary things, such as a platypus, an asteroid, or an earthquake, but they are all still common nouns. Remember, if you can put *the*, *a*, or *an* in front of a word, it is probably a common noun.

Grammar Extra

The, *a*, and *an* are short little words, but they play an important role. They are known as the definite article (*the*) and the indefinite article (*a* and *an*).

If you say *a* man, you are talking about *any* man. If you say *the* man, you are talking about a particular man—a *definite* man.



Proper Nouns

Some nouns start with a capital letter. These are called proper nouns. They name one specific thing, such as a particular person or a particular country. Your name is a proper noun, and so is the name of the country in which you live. Here are some more examples of proper nouns, followed by the matching common noun:

Proper Noun	Common Noun
William	boy
Potter	surname
Norway	country
Friday	day
October	month

Did You Know?

The word “sandwich” is a common noun today, but it didn’t start out that way. Legend has it that a tasty snack of meat placed between two pieces of bread was created for the Earl of Sandwich—Sandwich is a town in England, so it is a proper noun in this case—and named after him.

The words *cardigan*, *leotard*, and *silhouette* were people’s names, so they were once proper nouns, too.

Abstract Nouns

The word “abstract” describes something that is an idea rather than an object. Abstract nouns are words that describe things, but not things that actually exist as objects. You can’t see them or hear them, and you can’t touch, smell or taste them, either.

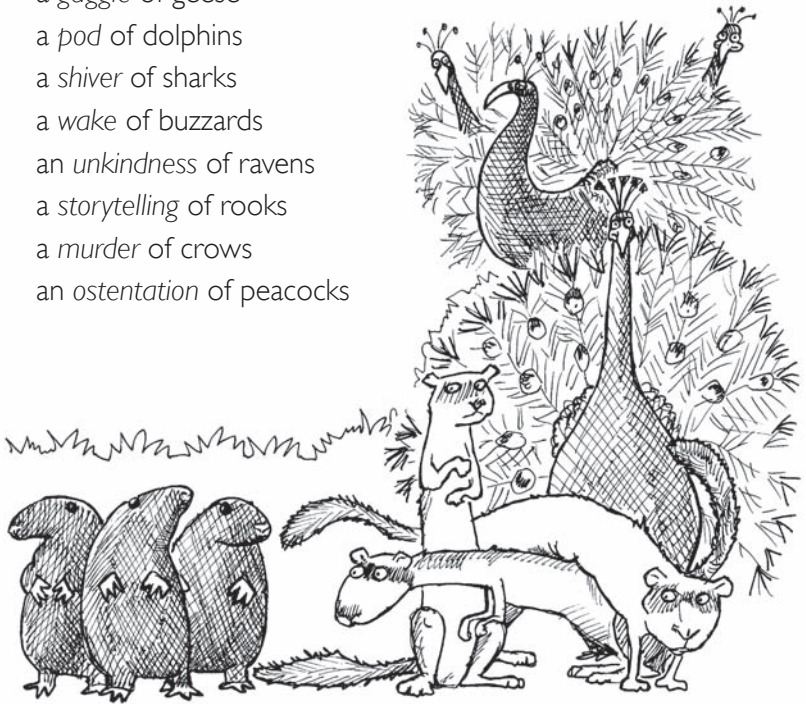
Collective Nouns

Collective nouns describe groups of people or things. For example, a *class* is a group of schoolchildren, an *army* is a group of soldiers, and a *deck* is a group of cards.

Did You Know?

There are lots of collective nouns for animals, too. You probably know some of the ordinary ones, such as a flock of sheep or a herd of cows, but how about these particularly unusual ones?

- a *business* of ferrets
- an *intrusion* of cockroaches
- a *descent* of woodpeckers
- a *gaggle* of geese
- a *pod* of dolphins
- a *shiver* of sharks
- a *wake* of buzzards
- an *unkindness* of ravens
- a *storytelling* of rooks
- a *murder* of crows
- an *ostentation* of peacocks

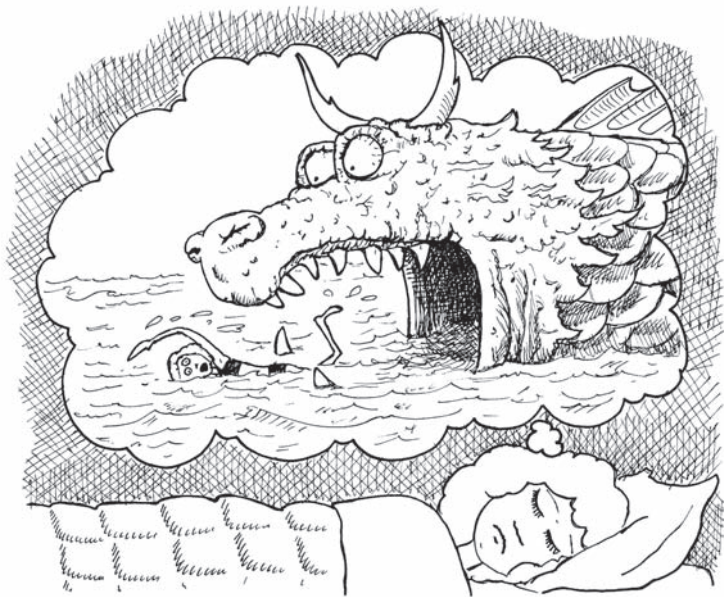


ALTERNATE WITH PRONOUNS



Pronouns are words that are used as stand-ins for nouns. This means that you can use them instead of nouns to really liven up your speaking or writing. Try reading this:

Lucy spotted a sea monster. The sea monster had enormous horns, and the sea monster was swimming straight toward Lucy. Lucy couldn't outswim the sea monster. Could Lucy tame the sea monster or hypnotize the sea monster? The sea monster was getting nearer. The sea monster's huge mouth opened in a roar. Help! The sea monster was going to eat Lucy.... Then Lucy woke up.



This writing is a bit repetitive, isn't it? Now let's see what happens when you put some pronouns in.

Lucy spotted a sea monster. *It* had enormous horns, and *it* was swimming straight toward *her*. *She* couldn't out-swim *it*. Could *she* tame *it* or hypnotize *it*? *It* was getting nearer. *Its* huge mouth opened in a roar. Help! The sea monster was going to eat *her*.... Then Lucy woke up.

See how much snappier it is, thanks to a few pronouns? In the paragraph above, *it*, *she*, and *her* are all pronouns.

What's Mine Is Yours

The words listed below are called personal pronouns. The words in the first column are pronouns that you can use as the subject of a sentence. The pronouns in the second column can be used as the object in a sentence. (See page 51 for more on subjects and objects.) The third column contains possessive pronouns. These are used to show that something belongs to someone—or to several people:

Subject	Object	Possessive
I	me	mine
you	you	yours
he	him	his
she	her	hers
it	it	its
we	us	ours
you (plural)	you	yours
they	them	theirs

Grammar Guidance. Avoid using a pronoun if it makes the meaning of your sentence unclear. For example:

If the children don't finish their vegetables, put them in the trash.

Here it's not clear whether the vegetables or the children will end up in the trash!

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person or thing or expresses an unclear amount, such as *all*, *any*, *none*, or *some*. Below are some of the most common indefinite pronouns:

all	everything
another	few
any	many
anybody	nobody
anyone	none
anything	several
each	somebody
everybody	someone
everyone	

Here are some sentences that include indefinite pronouns:

Everybody ran for their cars as the thunder roared overhead.

Many people chuckled at the mayor's opening line.

Anybody can join the chorus.

FURTHER PRONOUNS



Lots of different words can act as pronouns, and they have many different jobs. Here are just a few of them.

Relative Pronouns

The words *that*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, and *whose* can be used as relative pronouns. These are words that connect two parts of a sentence and describe the relationship between the two parts. For example:

This is the boy *who* took my candy.

There is the dog, *which* belongs to my neighbor.

Where is the ball *that* I kicked over the fence?

Grammar Guidance. When referring to people, use “who.” When referring to animals or things, use “which” or “that.”

Reflexive Pronouns

The words *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves* are called reflexive pronouns. A reflexive pronoun allows you to refer back to a person or thing that you have already mentioned.

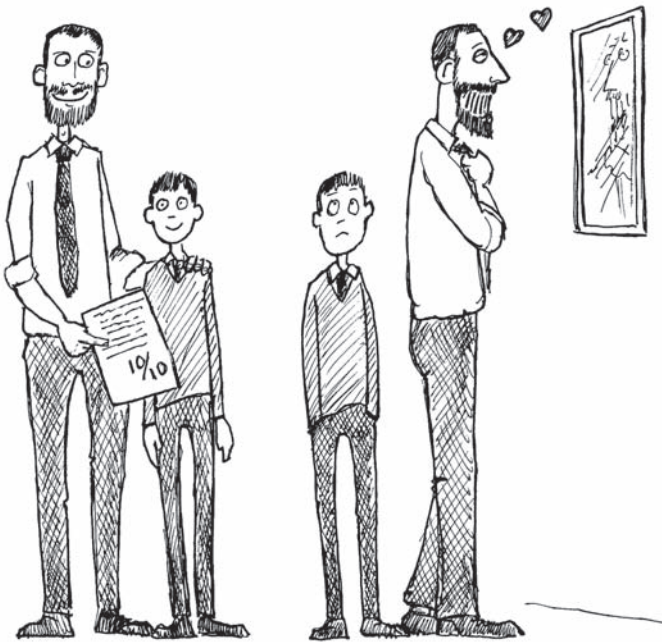
Subject	Reflexive Pronoun
I	myself
you	yourself
he	himself
she	herself
it	itself
we	ourselves
you	yourselves
they	themselves

You use a reflexive pronoun when a sentence has the same subject and object in it, like this:

I can look after myself.

In this sentence *I* is the subject, and *myself* is the object.

Grammar Guidance. Be careful. Sometimes a reflexive pronoun can change the meaning of a sentence completely:



TOM'S TEACHER WAS
EXTREMELY PLEASSED WITH
HIM.

TOM'S TEACHER WAS
EXTREMELY PLEASSED WITH
HIMSELF.

Can you tell the difference?

ADJECTIVES FOR EXTRA STRENGTH



Sometimes a noun on its own just doesn't give you enough detail—you may want to add information. To do this, you use a word called an adjective. Think of it as an added extra that describes the noun.

Using Adjectives

Suppose you need to describe a building and you want to tell people what the building is like—you'll need to use adjectives. You might say an *old, ruined* building, or a *scary, abandoned* building. *Old, ruined, scary,* and *abandoned* are all adjectives.

Grammar Guidance. An adjective goes before the noun it is describing, like this:

a *blue* moon

a *gorgeous* girl

a *grumpy* teacher

the *top* floor

an *ugly* bug

Small, Smaller, Smallest...

Some adjectives can be used to make a comparison. There are two kinds—a “comparative” one and a “superlative” one. Use the comparative when you compare *two* things. For example,

My dessert is *smaller* than yours.

A comparative adjective always goes hand in hand with “than.”





You should use a superlative adjective when you are comparing *several* things, as in:

My dessert is the *smallest* of the three.

Here are some more examples:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
small	smaller	smallest
big	bigger	biggest
large	larger	largest
narrow	narrower	narrowest
pale	paler	palest
rich	richer	richest
easy	easier	easiest

Grammar Guidance. Adjectives that have more than two syllables (see page 71 for more on these), such as “beautiful” and

“popular;” do not follow the same rule. For example, there’s no such thing as “beautifuler” and “beautifullest.” For these adjectives you should always use the words “more” and “than” to make your comparison. For example:

Your painting is *more* beautiful than mine.

To make the superlative, you should use “most”:

Your painting is the *most* beautiful of all.

This rule also works for any adjective ending in “-ous,” “-ing,” or “-ed,” such as *famous*, *boring*, or *excited*.

Rule Breakers

Finally, there are a few adjectives that break all the rules. Here are a few examples:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
bad	worse	worst
good	better	best
little	less	least
fun	more fun	most fun
many	more	most
much	more	most



ADVANCE ON VERBS

Verbs are “doing” words. *Cry, do, go, have, laugh, like, run, skip, speak, splutter, tell, try, wish*—these are all verbs. They describe the actions of someone or something in a sentence. Without a verb, you don’t have a sentence:

Jason a mountain.

Lucy her violin.

Cats mice.

See? You need to add a verb for each group of words to make sense. For instance:

Jason *climbed* a mountain.

Lucy *plays* her violin.

Cats *chase* mice.



Verbs in their simplest form, used with the word “to,” are known as infinitives. To speak and to run, for example, are the infinitives of the verbs speak and run—you will often use an infinitive with another verb, like this:

I *like* to run.

I *want* to speak.

With or Without?

Some verbs can work well with just a subject noun (see page 58 for more on these). The following sentences make perfect sense by themselves:

Babies chuckle.

Toast burns.

However, many verbs need an object noun or they don't make much sense at all. For instance, I *buy* and I *get* don't tell you anything on their own—you need more detail:

I buy a *ticket*.

I get a *train*.

Grammar Guidance. There are lots of short verbs that you use all the time, such as *come*, *do*, *go*, *see*, *say*, *run*, and *walk*. However, when you're building a sentence, you can have fun thinking about which other verbs to use instead.

Not Now!

Negative words, such as *not* and *neither*, will give a sentence the opposite meaning. For example:

I *do not* want to speak.

However, two negatives in a sentence contradict each other. “I *don't* like running *neither*,” for example, means you *do* like

running. This is known as a double negative and should be avoided altogether.

Lost for Words?

One of the great things about the English language is that there are so many different words you can choose to liven up your speech. How about using any of the following words in place of *speak*, for instance?

chatter
gabble
grumble
jabber
mutter
prattle
whisper

Or these in place of *run*?

bound
dash
hurtle
lope
rush
scamper
scramble



If you are ever stuck for a replacement word, try using a special kind of dictionary called a "thesaurus." In a thesaurus, words with similar meanings, or "synonyms" (see page 63), are arranged in groups so that you can easily choose an alternative word.

Know One When You See One

Words like *ring* and *hop* can be used as both a verb and a noun, so it's important to be able to identify its function within a sentence. For instance:

The phone began to ring.

The ring of the phone woke me from my sleep.

She tried to hop over the fence.

She made a short hop into New York.

In the first sentence *ring* and *hop* are used as a verb. In the second they are nouns. If you're not sure which word is the verb in the sentence, read it over and think about which word could be something a person or thing can do:

Every night I brush my teeth and jump into bed.

Which of these words can you do? Can you jump? Yes! Can you brush? Yes! Those are the verbs.