Parts of Speech

Traditional grammar recognizes eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

Many words can function as more than one part of speech. For example, depending on its use in a sentence, the word *paint* can be:

- a noun (The *paint* is wet.)
- or a verb (Please *paint* the ceiling next.)

Nouns: A noun (N) is the name of a person, place, thing, or concept.

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N   N   N

The *lion* in the *cage* growled at the *zookeeper*.

</div>

Pronouns: A pronoun (P) is a word used in place of a noun. Usually the pronoun substitutes for a specific noun, known as its antecedent (ANT).

<div style="text-align:center">

P

You know the answer.

ANT   P

When the *battery* wears down, we recharge *it*.

</div>

Verbs: The verb of a sentence usually expresses action (jump, think) or being (is, become). It is composed of a main verb (MV) preceded by one of more helping verbs (HV).

<div style="text-align:center">

MV

The horses *exercise* every day.

HV   MV

The task force report *was* not *completed* on schedule.

</div>

Adjectives: An adjective (ADJ) is a word used to modify, or describe, a noun or pronoun. An adjective usually answers one of these questions: Which one? What kind? How many?

<div style="text-align:center">

ADJ

The decision was *unpopular*.

ADJ   ADJ   ADJ

I ordered *the special deep-dish, Chicago-style* pizza.

</div>

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Parts of Speech

Adverbs: An adverb (ADV) is a word used to modify, or qualify, a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. It usually answers one of these questions: When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? To what degree?

ADV
Pull *firmly* on the emergency handle.

ADV
They use the truck *occasionally*.

Prepositions: A preposition (PREP) is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence. The prepositional phrase nearly always functions as an adjective or as an adverb.

PREP   PREP   PREP
The road *to* the summit travels *past* craters *from* an extinct volcano.

Conjunctions: Conjunctions join words, phrases, or clauses, and they indicate the relation between the elements joined.
- Coordinating conjunctions (CC) and correlative conjunctions link words, phrases, or clauses of equal importance: *and, but, or, not, both…and, not only… but*

CC   CC
Both biofeedback *and* relaxation can relieve headaches.

- Subordinating conjunctions (SC) introduce subordinate clauses and indicate the relation of the clause to the rest of the sentence: *after, although, because, before, though, unless, until, where, whether, while*

SC
Even though the parents are illiterate, their children may read well.

Interjections: An interjection is a word or group of words used to express surprise or strong emotion.

- When it stands alone, punctuate an interjection with an exclamation point: *Hooray!*
- As part of a sentence, set off an interjection with a comma or commas: *Hooray, you got the promotion*.

Use interjections sparingly (if at all) in academic writing.

The information for this handout was compiled from the following sources:
Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2010). *The little brown handbook* (11th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
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Troyka, L. Q., & Hesse, D. (2007). *Quick access: Reference for writers* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

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