

Writing handbook

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but the index found at the back of the book
lists them by rule, with letter and number.*

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A Parts of speech

In general

- A1** Words can be classified as parts of speech—to some extent according to what they mean outside of sentences but chiefly according to the way in which they are used in sentences.
- A2** Nine parts of speech may be listed: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, exclamatory words, and dummy subjects. To this list may be added the three verbals—gerunds, participles, and infinitives—which combine the natures of two or more parts of speech.
- A3** The parts of speech are here defined.
- A *noun* is the name of a person, place, or thing.
Straighten the *calendar*.
- A *pronoun* is a word that is used in place of a noun.
Crabtree was expected to object, but *he* didn't.
Helen said *she* would make ham sandwiches for us.
- A *verb* is a word that puts action into a sentence. It expresses action, state, or being.
Millings *tied* the bundle to the crossbar.
- An *adjective* is a word that modifies a noun or a pronoun.
I'm *afraid* that I'm the *ugly* duckling.
- An *adverb* is a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.
A *very* high wall surrounded the place.
- A *preposition* is a word that has a noun or pronoun as its object and forms with that object one modifying unit called a phrase.
The vertical lines *in* newspapers are called column rules.

A *conjunction* is a word or group of words whose main purpose is to connect sentence parts, sentences, and paragraphs. It does not take an object.

Joseph *and* I are the pleasantest people!

An *exclamatory word* is a word or group of words that expresses emotion but has no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence.

Oh, someone will take care of it.

A *dummy subject* (expletive) is the word *it* or *there* used simply to indicate that the subject is coming after the predicate verb or to avoid awkward constructions.

It was plain that he was distressed.

There are no cars available.

A *gerund* is a verb-noun in *ing*. It names an action.

The pleasure of *waiting* is all yours.

A *participle* is a verb-adjective.

Carlson, *returning*, bolted the door.

An *infinitive* is a verb-noun, often introduced by *to*, that has *ing* only in the progressive form. It names an action.

It is too late to *run*.

- A4 The same word, spelled the same way, can sometimes be several parts of speech in turn.

The *little* man was peering at me again. *Little* is an adjective.

The cymbal player cared *little* for music of any kind. *Little* is an adverb.

Let me have a *little*, please. *Little* is a pronoun.

The noun

- A5 A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing. ("Thing" includes not only objects, but also qualities or conditions, actions, ideas, and so on.)

KINDS OF NOUNS

- A6 A common noun is a name shared by all persons or things of the same kind. It can be applied to every member of a group or class of things.

man	knife
house	dog

- A7 A proper noun is a person's or thing's own name. It is the particular name of a particular person, place, or thing.

Daniel Boone	Chicago	Buick
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- A8 A concrete noun is the name of an object that exists by itself. Often, not always, such an object is perceived by the senses.

mountain	soul
violin	angel
flame	air

- A9 An abstract noun names something that does not exist by itself: a quality or condition, an action, an idea.

courage	playing
dampness	sport

- A10 A collective noun is a word that even in the singular names a group of persons or things.¹

team	audience
army	chorus

GENDER OF NOUNS

- A11 Nouns are said to be of the masculine gender when they carry with them the notion of the male sex.

The *boy* looked searchingly at me.

The *waiter* seemed to sneer without sneering.

My *uncle* really did intend to pay the rent.

The *stallion* reared his fine head.

¹ For predicate-verb agreement with collective nouns, see C14-15.

- A12** Nouns are said to be of the feminine gender when they carry with them the notion of the female sex.

The *girl* says she heard no call.

The *waitress* sniffed and disappeared.

My *aunt* hopes to attend the classes for adults.

The *mare* was altogether proud of the colt and showed it.

- A13** Nouns are said to be of the masculine-or-feminine (common) gender when they carry with them the notion of sex without distinguishing between male and female.

People are funny.

Parents often have no way of letting a child know how completely they understand the problems of young social life.

It is dangerous to take a bone from a *dog*.

- A14** Nouns are said to be of the neuter gender when they name things that have no sex.

A great *rock* lay some yards to the left.

The *idea* was new to me.

- A15** Some sexless things are always given masculine or feminine gender by tradition or necessity.

God has *His* plan for you.

My guardian *angel* has had *his* disappointments—if an *angel* can be disappointed.

- A16** Some sexless things are sometimes given a gender in lively or poetic writing.

When you feed the body, you should remember to let the *soul* also have *her* food.

She was a graceful *ship*, much in love with speed.

Russia has made no move that would lead us to trust *her*.

The *moon* hid *herself* for a moment.

That ol' *man river*, *he* don't say nuthin'.

- A17** The vegetable kingdom is ordinarily treated as neuter.

The *tree* lay in ruins, *its* upended roots high in the air.

Now here is a *blossom* that certainly has not wasted *its* sweetness on the desert air.

- A18** Collective nouns naming groups as groups (not as individuals) are treated as neuter.

The *crowd* had *its* attention diverted by the frantically waving man on the fire escape.

As usual, the *army* overextended *its* supply lines.

- A19** The common-noun names of very young children are often treated as neuter in passages where the sex of the child has no bearing on the thought.

A *child* [an *infant*, a *baby*] has *its* rights no less than an adult.

- A20** The common-noun names of animals are often treated as neuter regardless of the thought of the passage.

A *hen* is perfectly happy trying to hatch a darning egg along with *its* own real eggs.

PERSON OF NOUNS

- A21** A noun that designates the speaker is in the first person.

This revolver belongs to me, *James Horder*.

- A22** A noun that designates the person or thing spoken to is in the second person.

I mean you, *Bill*.

For you, my *country*, I will gladly die; but I had rather live.

- A23** A noun that designates the person or thing spoken of is in the third person.

St. Barbara is the *patron* of *gunners* and *miners*.

NUMBER OF NOUNS

- A24** A singular noun names one person or thing; a plural noun names more than one person or thing.²

Singular	Plural
boy	boys
tree	trees

² For the correct spelling of plurals, see I4-10.

- A25 Some nouns are plural in form but singular in meaning.

The *news* is all good.

Measles is catching.

The pronoun

- A26 A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun.

Helen said *she* would make ham sandwiches for us.

She is used in place of *Helen*.

Tom made this bow. *He* is clever with tools but so hasty that *he* cut *himself* several times.

The two *hes* and *himself* take the place of *Tom*.

My uncle has an unconventional spaniel *that* does not sit up and beg.

That takes the place of *spaniel*.

- A27 The noun whose place a pronoun takes is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

Helen said she would make ham sandwiches for us.

Helen is the antecedent of *she*.

Tom made this bow. He is clever with tools but so hasty that he cut himself several times.

Tom is the antecedent of the two *hes* and *himself*.

- A28 Some words can be thought of as nouns, pronouns, or adjectives. They differ from ordinary pronouns in this, that they can modify³ an implied but unexpressed noun.⁴

The *good* enjoy two worlds.

As an adjective, *good* modifies the absent noun *people*.

They enjoy two worlds.

They is a pronoun. It cannot modify *people*. *Good people* makes sense, but *they people* does not.

³ For the meaning of *modify*, see A103.

⁴ See A104.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

- A29 The personal pronouns are called "personal" because, without looking at the sentence in which they stand, one can tell whether they indicate the speaker (first person), the person or thing spoken to (second person), or the person or thing spoken of (third person).

The personal pronouns are—⁵

	First person	
	Singular	Plural
Nominative	I	we
Possessive	mine	ours
Objective	me	us
	Second person	
	Singular	Plural
Nominative	you (thou)	you
Possessive	yours (thine)	yours
Objective	you (thee)	you
	Third person	
	Singular	Plural
Nominative	he, she, it	they
Possessive	his, hers, its	theirs
Objective	him, her, it	them

- A30 *He*, *his*, and *him* are used when the antecedent is masculine or common; *she*, *hers*, and *her*, when the antecedent is feminine; *it* and *its*, when the antecedent is neuter; the rest of the personal-pronoun forms are used no matter what the gender of the antecedent.⁶

On the witness stand the policeman testified that *he* had fired in self-defense.

Grace decided to buy the orange hat, even though *she* thought *it* was rather expensive.

⁵ The forms *my*, *our*, *your*, *her*, and *their* are not given here because, under the system followed in this book, they are considered possessive (pronominal) adjectives, not pronouns. *His* and *its* also, when they accompany and modify a noun, are considered adjectives, not pronouns.

⁶ For the gender of antecedents, see A11-20.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

A31 The demonstrative pronouns are—

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
this	these
that	those

A32 The demonstrative pronouns are used to specify, to point out, to call attention to their antecedents with special emphasis.

This is my choice.

I did not say *that*.

Deliver *those* to my home; *these* I'll take with me.

A33 The demonstrative pronouns take the place of their antecedents; they do not accompany and modify nouns as the demonstrative adjectives do.

This is my home.

This—demonstrative pronoun
—takes the place of *house* or *home* as subject of the predicate verb *is*.

This home is mine.

This—demonstrative adjective
—is not the subject or object but accompanies and modifies the noun *home*.

A34 The demonstrative pronouns have the same forms for all persons, genders, and cases.

A35 *This* and *these* ordinarily refer to what is present, near, just referred to, or about to be referred to; demonstrative *that* and *those*, to what is more remote in time or place.

Look at *this* [referring to something near the speaker].

Look at *that* [referring to something across the room].

People call me the Worm. *This* would anger me if I did not reflect that they would call me worse if they knew me better.

And now *this* is what I am going to say to you.

Centuries ago someone first said, "An argument cannot batter down a fact." *That* is still true.

A36 Demonstrative *that* and *those* are used to refer to the thing or idea indicated or understood from the situation or context.

The writing is *that* of Claiborne, but the sentiments are not his.

[The first word spoken to a man who has just entered a room:]

That is why I like you—you are always prompt.

[Boy meeting elderly lady carrying bundles:] I'll be glad to carry *those* for you, if there's nothing fragile in them.

Self-PRONOUNS

A37 The *self*-pronouns (compound personal pronouns) are—

	<i>First person</i>	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Nominative and objective</i>	myself	ourselves
	<i>Second person</i>	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Nominative and objective</i>	yourself	yourselves
	<i>Third person</i>	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Nominative and objective</i>	oneself ⁷	
	himself	themselves
	herself	
	itself	

A38 *Himself* is used when the antecedent is masculine or common; *herself*, when the antecedent is feminine; *itself*, when the antecedent is neuter; but all the rest of the *self*-pronouns are used no matter what the gender of the antecedent may be.⁸

It has been said of Abe Lincoln that *he* pulled *himself* up by his own bootstraps.

My *sister* climbed the tree *herself* and rescued her kitten before the firemen arrived.

A large *boulder* detached *itself* from the mass atop the hill, and began to roll down toward us with increasing momentum.

⁷ *Oneself* may also be written *one's self*.

⁸ For the gender of antecedents, see A11-20.