



This is a quick, basic grammar review for nouns, verbs, and the sometimes confusing usage of lay versus lie, and rise versus raise. This reference can be used for term papers, grammar class reviews, or simply for anyone confused or curious about the basics of English grammar.

Nouns

1. Noun identification
2. Count, Mass, and Collective Nouns
3. Plural and Possessive Nouns

Noun Identification

What is a noun? A noun is a person, place, thing, quality, animal, idea or activity.

For example:

Person — Maria

Place — Detroit

Thing — Desk

Quality — Width

Animal — Dog

Idea — Independence

Activity — Navigation

Spot the nouns in a sentence: Maria went into the city to purchase detergent.

Nouns: Person — Maria

Place — City

Thing — Detergent

The functions of nouns

Nouns sometimes function differently in sentences. For example:

Subject: Maria likes ice cream

Object of Preposition: He gave the ice cream to Maria

Subject complement: The best customer is Maria

Grammar vocabulary: Nominal means any word, or group of words, used as a noun. The nominal word used in the original noun example is Maria.

Types of Nouns

The names of specific things, places, and people, like Maria or Detroit, are Proper nouns.

General, colloquial names, like table or house are Common nouns. Common nouns can either be concrete, or abstract.

When an object is concrete i.e. you can see it and touch it, like a phone or a chair, it is a Concrete noun.

When it is a quality or idea, like freedom or justice, it is an Abstract noun.

Count Nouns

Count nouns are anything that can be counted. They are singular or plural. Plurals usually end with "s."

Singular — Car

Plural — Cars

Singular — Chair

Plural — Chairs

Singular — Dog

Plural — Dogs

Irregular Examples

Singular — Mouse

Plural — Mice

Singular — Child

Plural — Children

Most nouns ending in s, sh, o, or ch need an -es suffix to be plural

Singular — Bus

Plural — Buses

Singular — Dish

Plural — Dishes

Singular — Potato

Plural — Potatoes

Singular — Church

Plural — Churches

Nouns ending in a consonant followed by y become plural by changing the y to i and adding -es

Singular — Mystery

Plural — Mysteries

Mass Nouns are nouns that cannot be counted and they usually do not have a plural form

Examples: Freedom, sand, money

Collective nouns refer to groups of people and/or things. Unlike mass nouns, they can usually be counted, so they usually have plural forms.

Examples:

Singular — Staff

Plural — Staffs

Singular — Herd

Plural — Herds

Plural Nouns

Plural nouns are the nouns that have been changed into their plural states by adding -s or -es. Remember your irregular nouns, such as mice and children! They too are plural nouns.

Possessive Nouns

Nouns can be possessive and express ownership, usually following the use of “of.”

Example: The life of Maria

Most singular possessives are formed by adding an apostrophe and “s.” If the noun is plural, the possessive form becomes “s” and apostrophe.

Singular Common: Dog

Singular Possessive: Dog’s

Plural Common: Dogs

Plural Possessive: Dogs’

Exception: if the plural noun does not end with an “s,” the possessive is formed by adding apostrophe and “s.”

Example:

Singular Common: Woman

Singular Possessive: Woman’s

Plural Common: Women

Plural Possessive: Women’s

Pronouns

A pronoun takes the place of an unknown noun. The unknown noun is called the “antecedent.”

Example: Maria wondered if she was late for work.

Maria is the antecedent of “she.” Instead of saying: Maria wondered if Maria was late for work, “she” appears to take the place of “Maria.”

The Nine forms of Pronouns:

Personal, possessive, indefinite, reflexive, reciprocal, intensive, interrogative, relative, and demonstrative.

The pronoun must always agree with antecedent, so if the antecedent is male, the pronoun must be male, if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural, etc.

Example:

Correct: When Maria bought the detergent, she used her credit card.

Incorrect: When Maria bought the detergent, they used his credit card.

Pronoun Cases

Nominative Cases: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who

The nominative, or subjective, case pronoun is the subject of the sentence.

Examples: She went to the store.

Who has the book?

I am he.

This is she.

Objective Cases: Me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom

These function as direct or indirect objects.

Examples:

We gave HER the bus money.

We gave IT to HER.

I don't know to WHOM I speak.

The bag is with HER.

Possessive Cases: My, mine, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, theirs, your, yours, whose

The possessive case pronoun shows possession

Example:

That is MY bag.

That bag is MINE.

HER bus was late.

The bags are all HERS.

Personal Pronouns can refer to the person/people speaking (First person,) spoken to (second

person,) or spoken ABOUT (third person.)

First person subject singular: I

First person subject plural: We

First person object singular: me

First person object plural: us

Second person subject singular: you

Second person subject plural: you

Second person object singular: you

Second person object plural: you

Third person subject singular: he, she, it

Third person subject plural: they

Third person object singular: him, her, it

Third person object plural: them

Example: I wanted to give them to her, but he wouldn't let me.

I — first person singular

Them — third person plural

Her — third person singular

He — third person singular

Me — first person singular

Possessive Pronouns

Like regular nouns, personal pronouns can also be possessive. Possessive Determiners are possessive forms of personal pronouns. Possessive Determiners must have a following noun.

First person determiner singular: My (book)

First person determiner plural: Our (book)

First person pronoun singular: Mine

First person pronoun plural Ours

Second person determiner singular: Your (book)

Second person determiner plural Your (book)

Second person pronoun singular: Yours

Second person pronoun plural: Yours

Third person determiner singular: His, Her, Its (book)

Third person determiner plural: Their (book)

Third person pronoun singular: His, hers, its

Third person pronoun plural: Theirs

Example: They have MY bags but they know they're MINE.

My — Determiner, dependent on "Bags"

Mine- stands in place of "My bags."

Indefinite Pronouns

These have no specific antecedents. These are usually identified with general words like: all, any, some, or none.

Examples:

Singular: another, both, nobody, everything, nothing, somebody, everyone, no one, something, etc.

Plural: all, many, most, much, some

Examples: Somebody has her bags.

Plural: Everyone knows about Maria's bags.

Indefinite pronouns are only pronouns if they are used ALONE. If they are used with a noun, they become indefinite adjectives.

Pronoun: Both knew they were Maria's bags.

Adjective: Both baggers knew they were Maria's bags.

If the subject performs actions TO or FOR itself, the action in the sentence passes BACK to the subject and becomes a reflexive pronoun.

First person singular: Myself

First person plural: Ourselves

Second person singular: Yourself

Second person plural: Yourselves

Third person singular: Himself/Herself/Itself

Third person plural: Themselves

Example: We asked OURSELVES where her bags were.

"We" is the doer and receiver of the action "ask."

Intensive Pronouns are used to point back to the noun or pronoun for emphasis.

Example: I myself knew they were Maria's bags.

The intensive pronoun does not always need to directly follow the noun.

Example: I prefer walking myself.

Reciprocal pronouns express mutual action.

Examples: each other/ each other's

One another/one another's

Maria and Heather greeted each other.

Interrogative Pronouns

These are used to ask questions and can be personal or non-personal

Personal subject: Who/Whoever

Personal object: Whom/Whomever

Personal possessive: Whose

Non-personal subject: Which

Non-personal subject: What

Example:

Who has the bags?

Which bagger has them?

Whose bags are these?

Demonstrative Pronouns

These substitute specific nouns, usually when someone is gesturing toward something.

Singular: This/That

Plural: These/Those

Example: These are for her.

Verbs

A verb is an action part of speech. It can also express a state of being, or the relationship between two things. It is most powerful when following a noun. Example: He HIT her. Verbs are the most complicated part of speech because they can sometimes become nouns, depending on their use.

The three kinds of verbs: transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, and linking verbs.

Transitive verbs

These take objects. Transitive verbs carry the action of subject and apply it to the object.

Example: She TOOK the bags.

Intransitive verbs

These do not take an object, but express actions that do not require the agent doing something to something else.

Example: She LEFT.

Linking verbs

These link the agent with the rest of the sentence and explain the link between the subject and the rest of the sentence.

Examples: appear, grow, seem, smell, taste

Example: Maria seems tired from shopping.

The Lay/Lie and Raise/Rise Confusion

These two pairs of verbs are constantly misused. In each, there is a transitive verb (TRV) and an intransitive verb (INV).

Lie — Intransitive, means recline or be situated

Lay — Transitive, means to place or put something

Rise — Intransitive, means to get up.

Raise — Transitive, means to lift something up.

Infinitive — INV: Lie

TRV: Lay

INV: Rise

TRV: Raise

Past Tense — Lie (Lay)

Raise (Raised)