



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo

THE PARTS OF SPEECH

Traditional grammar classifies words into one of eight categories that are based on the parts of speech: the noun, the pronoun, the adjective, the verb, the interjection, the adverb, the preposition, and the conjunction. Each part of speech explains not what the word *is*, but how the word *is used*.

Noun A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, idea, or quality.

Examples: boy, city, freeway, tree, planet, joy, freedom

Pronoun A pronoun takes the place of a noun.

Examples: I, you, he/she, it, we, they, them, us, him/her, it, his, yours, ours, nobody, who, whom, what

Adjective An adjective describes or limits a noun.

Example: Here are two smart, tall, green men from Mars.

(Adjectives)

Verb A verb expresses action or being (existence).

Examples of verbs of action: jump, sing, think, imitate.

Examples of verbs of being: am, is, are, was, were, be, being

Interjection An interjection is a word added to a sentence to convey emotion. It is not grammatically related to any other part of the sentence.

Example: *Ouch*, that hurts! *Hey*, put that down!

Adverb An adverb can describe or modify:

1) A verb, telling how, when, or to what degree an action is performed.

Example: John enjoyed the concert immensely.

(Verb)

(Adverb)

2) An adjective

Example: Because she is highly intelligent, the child understood the book.

(Adverb) (Adjective)

3) Another adverb

Example: The pedestrian ran across the street very rapidly.
(Verb) (Adverb)

(The adverb “rapidly” modifies the verb “ran,” and the adverb “very” modifies the adverb “rapidly.”)

Preposition A word that shows the relation of a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence.

Example: I am running over, under, around, and through the laundry.
(Prepositions) (Preposition)

Conjunctions A conjunction *connects* words, phrases, or clauses.

Examples of *coordinating conjunctions*: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (aka FANBOYS)

Examples of *correlative conjunctions*: both...and, either...or, neither...nor, not...but, not only...but also

Examples of *subordinating conjunctions*: when, while, because, as, since, after, although, as if, as though, before, even though, if, so that, though, unless, until, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, whether.

Comparatives and **Superlatives** These are special forms of adjectives. They are used to compare two or more things. Generally, comparatives are formed using *-er* and superlatives are formed using *-est*.

tives	<u>Adjective form</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
	hot	hotter	hottest
	cute	cuter	cutest
t	These are irregular Adjective forms:		
	good	better	best
	bad	worse	worst

Be sure to distinguish between good and well:

Good is an adjective, so you do not *do good* or *live good*, but you *do well* and *live well*. Remember that an adjective follows sense-verbs and be-verbs, so you also *feel good*, *look good*, *smell good*, *are good*, *have been good*, etc.

Confusion can occur, because *well* can function either as an adverb or an adjective. When *well* is used as an adjective, it means, "not sick" or "in good health." For this specific sense of *well*, it's okay to say you *feel well* or *are well*; for example, after recovering from an illness, you can say, "I feel well." When not used in this health-related sense; however, *well* functions as an adverb; for example, "I did *well* on my exam."

Exercise:

In the following paragraph, label the part of speech of each italicized word. Use these codes: noun (N), pronoun (PN), verb (V), adjective (ADJ), preposition (P), conjunction (C). The first four have been marked for you.

ADV ADJ P
The *somewhat formal* words of our Declaration of Independence contain a
N
declaration and a *promise*. The *final* lines of that decision *ring* out *like* the Liberty
Bell *itself*:

We, *therefore*, the representatives of the United States of America . . . do,
in the name *and* by the authority of the good people of these *colonies*, solemnly
publish and declare that these United Colonies *are*. . . *free*, and independent
states. . . And for the support *of* this declaration, *with a firm reliance* on Divine
Providence, we *mutually* pledge to each other our *lives*, our fortunes, and our
sacred *honor*. (Hacker 345)

This handout is based on the following texts:

Fawcett, Susan, and Alan Sandberg. Evergreen With Readings. 4th ed. New Jersey: Houghton Mifflin, 1992. 382-414.

Hacker, Dianne, and Wanda Van Goor. Bedford Basics. 2nd ed. New York: St Martin's, 1994. 339-344.

For further reference, see also:

Fawcett, Susan, and Alan Sandberg. Grassroots with Readings: The Writer's Workbook. 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 238-292.

All of the above texts are available in the Writing Center.