

## UNDERSTANDING PARTS OF SPEECH

### What are parts of speech?

Each part of speech serves a different purpose in communicating ideas. They can be identified by their purpose, location in a clause, and endings. This handout identifies and defines each part of speech and provides bolded examples in the section where they are discussed to demonstrate their purpose, placement, and endings.

### Parts of Speech and Their Forms

*Noun:* Commonly described as a **person**, **place**, or **thing**, a **noun** is the **subject** or **object** of a **sentence**, i.e. the **thing** that is acting or receiving an **action** in a **sentence**. **Pronouns**, a type of **noun**, substitute for and refer back to a previously mentioned **noun** in the same **sentence**. **Nouns** are an extremely diverse group of **words**, but some common noun **endings** are -tion, -er, -ism, -ist, -ity, and -hood.

*Verb:* A verb **describes** the action, occurrence, or state of the subject of a sentence. Verbs **tell** the tense –past, present, future– of an action, as well as whether it **is** a complete (perfect) or continuous action. This **creates** multiple forms of the same verb.

Example: Live

Past/Present/Future: lived/live/will live

Continuous/Perfect/Perfect Continuous: am living/have lived/have been living

*Adjective:* Adjectives add information about a noun or pronoun and come before or after the noun they add to. There can be **multiple** adjectives both before and after a noun describing **tangible** and **intangible** attributes. Adjectives have **many different** forms and are identified by their proximity to a noun and their endings. **Common** adjective endings are -able, -ful, -ive, -ic, -less, -ish, -ous, and -y.

*Adverb:* Adverbs **clearly** and **concisely** add information about a verb. They come before or after the verb they describe. Adverbs **almost always** end in -ly or -ally but can also have the same form as an adjective. To differentiate between an adjective and adverb, pay attention to the word's location in a sentence and whether it modifies the noun or verb.

*Article:* **A/An** or **The**. These appear before a **noun** or noun phrase. **A/An** is an indefinite article used before a nonspecific or general noun. **The** is a definite article used before a specific or identifiable noun.

*Preposition:* Prepositions come **before** a noun or noun phrase and give information **about** time, place, location, direction, and spatial relationships. Commonly used prepositions include **about**, **above**, **on**, **under**, **in**, **next to**, **between**, **after**, and **before**.

*Conjunction:* Conjunctions are used to connect one clause **or** idea to another. Coordinating conjunctions (**for**, **and**, **nor**, **but**, **or**, **yet**) are used to connect two clauses **or** ideas of equal importance **and** structure, **while** subordinating conjunctions like “**since**”, “**although**”, **and** “**while**” connect clauses **and** ideas of different importance.

### Changing Parts of Speech

Many words in English can be turned into a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb by using different endings for the word and changing its placement in a sentence. By familiarizing yourself with the common endings of these parts of speech, you can use your vocabulary in new ways.

Example: Live

**Lives** change when college starts. - Noun form

Students **are living** in dorms. - Verb form

**Lively** orientation leaders welcome students to campus. - Adjective form

Students can see music performed **live** during student events. - Adverb form