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WHAT ARE NOUNS?

Definition: A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

General Types of Nouns:

- I. Proper
- II. Common
 - a. Concrete and Abstract
 - b. Countable, Uncountable, and Collective
 - c. Compound
 - d. Gender Specific
 - e. Gerunds

I. **Proper Nouns** are words that name a specific person, place, or thing. A proper noun begins with an upper case letter because it is the name of a particular person, place, or thing.

Examples: George Washington, California, Monday, Coca-Cola

II. **Common Nouns** are words that name people, places, things, or ideas; BUT they are not the names of specific people, places, or things. A common noun begins with a lower case letter, unless it is at the beginning of a sentence.

Examples: boy, girl, hospital, store, pencil, car

Common Nouns are further classified into:

1. Concrete and Abstract

- a. Concrete nouns are “sense” words, or words that can be experienced with the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. You can see a *tree*, a *book*, a *person*, etc... You can hear a *bell*, a *horn*, a *voice*, etc... You can smell *popcorn*, *flowers*, *scents*, etc... You can taste the *pizza*, the *spice*, the *flavor*, etc... You can touch an *apple*, an *animal*, an *umbrella*, etc...
- b. Abstract nouns are words that refer to ideas, concepts, beliefs, or your state of being. Unlike concrete nouns, abstract nouns are things you cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. *Be careful identifying and using abstract nouns because sometimes a word can function as an abstract noun or a verb. The context and use of the word in a sentence determines whether the word is an abstract noun or verb.
 - 1) I *love* my dog. (In this sentence, the word *love* indicates an action and therefore is a verb.)
 - 2) *Love* is a strong emotion. (In this sentence, *love* is the subject of the sentence and acts as an abstract noun because *love* is a thing that you cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch.)

Other examples: love, hate, democracy, freedom, peace, trust, rage, education, happiness

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2. Countable, Uncountable, and Collective

- a. Countable nouns are nouns that can be counted. For example: a pencil, two pencils, three pencils... Thus, countable nouns have a singular and plural form.
- b. Uncountable nouns cannot be counted. These nouns are concepts, substances, information, feelings, materials, etc. Uncountable nouns are not individual objects and thus do not take a plural form. For example: work, water, anger, metal, sleep...
- c. Collective nouns refer to a group of things or individuals. A collective noun can be singular in form when referring to a group of people or things. For example: audience, class, school, family, jury, staff, team, flock, herd...

3. Compound

- a. A compound noun is made up of two or more words. A compound noun can be written in three ways: a single word like *haircut* or *football*, two words like *ice cream* or *swimming pool*, and hyphenated words like *mother-in-law* or *dry-cleaning*.

4. Gender Specific

- a. A gender-specific noun refers to the male/masculine or female/feminine form of a word. More often, in English, a noun will remain genderless. However, if the noun is a word referring specifically to something male or female, then its gender will be masculine or feminine.

Examples: Dad, king, actor, bull (refer to male so it is gender-specific)

Sister, queen, actress, cow (refer to female so it is gender-specific)

Pencil, vehicle, dog, cat (refer to neither male or female so it is genderless)

Parent, teacher, friend, doctor (refer to neither male nor female, but since it refers to people we know the noun must be either male or female. These nouns are also known as common gender nouns)

5. Gerunds

- a. A gerund is a verb ending in *-ing* that is functioning like a noun.
(PLEASE REFER TO VERBALS HANDOUT FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION)

PRACTICE – See if you can identify nouns in the sentences

1. My brother is going to San Francisco next month. (Hint: 2 common nouns, 1 proper noun)
2. Wild animals in captivity often seem miserable. (Hint: 1 concrete noun, 1 abstract noun)
3. He gave his girlfriend sunflowers and ice cream for their anniversary.
(Hint: 3 compound nouns, 1 abstract noun)
4. The waitress was tired because she had worked a double shift.
(1 gender-specific noun, 1 compound noun)