

Chapter 3

Noun Phrases

Now that we have established something about the structure of verb phrases, let's move on to noun phrases (NPs). A noun phrase is a noun or pronoun head and all of its modifiers (or the coordination of more than one NP--to be discussed in Chapter 6). Some nouns require the presence of a determiner as a modifier. Most pronouns are typically not modified at all and no pronoun requires the presence of a determiner. We'll start with pronouns because they are a relatively simple closed class.

Pronouns

English has several categories of pronouns. Pronouns differ in the contexts they appear in and in the grammatical information they contain. Pronouns in English can contrast in person, number, gender, and case. We've already discussed person and number, but to review:

1. English has three persons
 - first person, which is the speaker or the group that includes the speaker;
 - second person, which is the addressee or the group of addressees;
 - third person, which is anybody or anything else
2. English has two numbers
 - singular, which refers to a singular individual or undifferentiated group or mass;
 - plural, which refers to more than one individual.

The difference between *we* and *they* is a difference in person: *we* is first person and *they* is third person. The difference between *I* and *we* is a difference in number: *I* is singular and *we* is plural.

The other two categories which pronouns mark are gender and case. **Gender** is the system of marking nominal categories. English, in general, uses a natural gender system that reflects either animacy or humanness (*who* human vs. *what* non-human) or sex (*he* masculine, *she* feminine, and *it* neuter). If you have studied other languages like French or Spanish or German, then you have met languages with **grammatical gender**, a system in which nouns and pronouns are separated in categories which do not have to reflect their natural gender (so in French, the word for *table* is feminine -- but that does not imply that the French think tables are female). In English, you choose the gender of the pronoun you are using based on the actual gender of the referent of the pronoun -- regardless of how you are using the pronoun in the sentence. So if you were referring to George Washington, you would always use a masculine form (if there was one), regardless of whether the pronoun referring to Washington was the subject, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition or possessor in the clause in which the pronoun occurred.

1. He was the first president of the United States.
2. The Continental Congress made him the commanding general of the army.
3. After the war, some people wanted to give him a crown.
4. The idea of becoming king was not attractive to him.
5. The new nation, to his way of thinking, had to be a republic.

The gender of the pronouns referring to Washington in (1) - (5) are all masculine and singular. However, they do differ in form: *he, him, his*. This contrast is the contrast of **case** -- **case** refers to the aspect of form of NPs which is conditioned by the function of the NP in the sentence. In English, personal pronouns have three cases -- the case used for subjects (and sometimes subject complements) is called subject or subjective or nominative; the case used for possessors is called possessive or genitive; the case used for everything else (direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, sometimes subject complements, object complements) is called object or objective or accusative.

Personal pronouns in English contrast in person, number, gender and case. In the table below is the complete set of forms of personal pronouns. As you can see, in some persons, there are more distinct case (and number) forms than others: the subject and object forms of *it* do not contrast; the subject and object forms of *you* and the singular and plural forms of *you* do not contrast; the object and possessive forms of *she* do not contrast; etc.

	Subjective		Objective		Possessive			
	singular	plural	singular	plural	Determiner		Independent	
	singular	plural	singular	plural	singular	plural	singular	plural
first	<i>I</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>my</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>mine</i>	<i>ours</i>
second	<i>you</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>your</i>	<i>your</i>	<i>yours</i>	<i>yours</i>
third M	<i>he</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>their</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>theirs</i>
third F	<i>she</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>their</i>	<i>hers</i>	<i>theirs</i>
third N	<i>it</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>its</i>	<i>their</i>	<i>its</i>	<i>theirs</i>

Gender in present day English is typically natural gender – we choose our third person pronoun based on the actual sex of the referent. We maintain a few forms in which we use a pronoun for something which doesn't match the referent's actual sex. For example, there is a tradition of referring to boats, cars, storms (etc.) as *she*. This is a relict usage – many of us use *it* for all these things and it is always acceptable to use the form that reflects the actual gender of the referent. In general, gender is only a problem when referring to humans whose gender you don't know or which isn't specified.

English has a tradition of using the masculine pronoun *he* as a “gender neutral” pronoun alongside its use as a sex-specific pronoun. The result has been generally confusing, often leading readers and listeners to assume that writers and speakers are referring exclusively to men, when in fact they are referring to both men and women. It is difficult to advocate the use of a form which will often mislead the audience. Moreover, it is clear that *he* is not in fact completely “gender neutral” since speakers and writers do not use it to refer to indefinites whose referents are exclusively or overwhelmingly female. Check out textbooks about nursing or teaching and you'll find that “A nurse is expected to be immaculate in her appearance”, not “his appearance”. It is difficult to imagine anyone announcing “A nursing mother should not be allowed to feed his child in public”. For a very long time, English speakers have used *they* side-by-side with *he* to refer to indefinite antecedents. This raised a problem for prescriptivists who believed that it was problematic to have a mismatch in form (singular antecedent referred to with

a plural pronoun) (though not a problem to run the risk of misleading the reader/listener as to the nature of the referent).

Special uses of plural number In general, singular forms of personal pronouns refer to single individuals or undifferentiated masses. However, plural forms all have uses in which their referents are not plural. The most obvious case is the second person forms, *you/your*, which shows no difference in form for singular or plural referents. Historically, this *you* form is only a plural form; in general, the singular forms (*thee, thou, thy*) have died in present day English¹. Apparently the contrast between the second person singular and plural was used to convey more than just a difference in number. Plural forms were used to indicate that one was addressing a person of power or a person from whom one felt socially distant. The singular forms became associated with specific religious and political groups which were mostly viewed as fringe groups (much the way *comrade* has been stigmatized by its association with communist and socialist groups in the English speaking world). The plural form was simply extended into all uses and replaced the singular form. (This also accounts for why the verb agreement for the second person looks just like the verb agreement for all the plural forms: So *are* is found with subjects which must be interpreted as referring to single individuals in the second person in *You are a fine person*, just as it is otherwise only found with plural subjects elsewhere as in *We are fine people, They are fine people, You are fine people*.

Similarly first and third person plural forms are used to refer to single entities under certain conditions. First person plural forms are used to refer to single individuals under some fairly constrained circumstances. Monarchs use the royal *we*, so Queen Victoria of England is often quoted as announcing “We are not amused”, meaning that she was not amused. The editorial *we* is often used by writers to avoid using *I*, which has been heavily prescribed against in formal writing.

Third person plurals have been used to refer to indefinite singular antecedents throughout modern English (and before). Prescriptivists as noted above have long claimed that it is ungrammatical to write *Somebody left their notebook behind* and *Everybody believes in their own rectitude*², both sentence types that can be documented throughout the modern English period (and before), as in

God send every one their heart's desire! [*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III Scene 4]

¹ Some religious groups still maintain these forms in everyday communications and others maintain them for specifically religious use. (In the latter case, the association presumably arises from the fact that they are used in the *King James version of the Bible*, which was, of course, early Modern English..

² These are cases where you may decide that in writing it is best to avoid the whole problem, using overtly plural forms, *All people believe in their own rectitude* or avoiding the pronoun *Someone left a notebook behind*.

Reflexive pronouns contrast only in person, number, and gender. Reflexive pronouns match their antecedents in these features: person, number and gender.

		Singular	Plural
1 st Person		<i>myself</i>	<i>ourselves</i>
2 nd Person		<i>yourself</i>	<i>yourselves</i>
3 rd Person	Masculine	<i>himself</i>	<i>themselves</i>
	Feminine	<i>herself</i>	
	Neuter	<i>itself</i>	

They do not distinguish different cases; presumably because they only appear in objective case functions in a clause. Reflexive pronouns have a far more limited distribution than personal pronouns. Reflexive pronouns never appear as subjects of finite clauses or as possessors.

Moreover, reflexive pronouns in simple sentences are usually grammatical only if their antecedent precedes them in the clause, so

8. Matilda saw herself in the mirror.

9. I asked Bill about himself.

are fine, but

10. *Matilda saw yourself in the mirror.

11. *I asked himself about Bill.

are ungrammatical.

Some school grammars claim that reflexive pronouns must have the subject of the clause as their antecedent. This is obviously false since in (14) the antecedent for *himself* is *Bill*, the object of *asked*, not its subject. It is clearly linear order that matters in most cases. However, linear order is not enough by itself. For example, a possessor cannot serve as an antecedent for a reflexive even it precedes the reflexive, so

12. *Bill's mother loves himself

is ungrammatical even though *Bill's* precedes *himself*.

In some marked constructions, in which a NP comes in an odd preposed position, the reflexive pronoun can precede its antecedent,

13. Himself, Bill always thinks of first.

(Clearly, a more ordinary way of saying the same thing is *Bill always thinks of himself first* in which the reflexive pronoun would follow its antecedent.)

Demonstrative pronouns contrast only in number and distance. Demonstratives distinguish nearer to the speaker (*this, these*) from farther from the speaker (*that, those*).

	Singular	Plural
Proximal (Nearer)	<i>this</i>	<i>these</i>
Distal (Farther)	<i>that</i>	<i>those</i>

When we talk about distance, we can be referring to distance in space, so the pen in my hand would be “this”, while the pen ten feet away would be “that”.

14. This/that doesn’t work.

Distance can be temporal –

15. This is a confusing war.

16. That was a confusing war.

In (20) *this* must refer to a closer war than the one in (21), but closer how? Not in space, but in time. (20) refers to the current war; (21) to some previous war.

Distance can be social: stuff the speaker associates with himself or herself is more likely to be “this”; stuff the speaker wishes to be distant from is “that”.

Wh- pronouns contrast only in case and gender. There are two kinds of **wh-** pronouns: interrogative and relative pronouns. In fact, there a range of wh- proforms which include the pronouns, but also include proadverbials and determiners as well.

Interrogative Proforms		Subjective	Objective	Possessor
Pronouns	Human	<i>who</i>	<i>who(m)</i>	<i>whose</i>
	Nonhuman	<i>what</i>	<i>what</i>	<i>whose</i>
	Closed Set	<i>which</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>whose</i>
				No case
Adverbial	Place			<i>where</i>
	Time			<i>when</i>
	Reason			<i>why</i>
	Manner/Instrument			<i>how</i>
Determiner	General			<i>what</i>
	Closed Set			<i>which</i>

Interrogative proforms are used in direct and indirect questions.³ These proforms function as NPs, as adverbials and as determiners.

17. Who is helping you? (*who* as the subject)

18. What are you talking about? (*what* as the object of a preposition)

19. Which can you see best? (*which* as the direct object)

20. Where are you going? (*where* as an adverbial)

21. Which book did you read? (*which* as a determiner)

22. I asked the teacher what great scientist I should write about. (*what* as a determiner)

³ We’ll talk more about indirect questions when we talk about complex sentences.

Interrogative proforms function as kinds of placeholders in the sentence to mark what information the speaker wants: So in (22) the speaker wants to know the subject of the “is helping you”.

In direct questions, the interrogative proforms must appear in the first phrase in the sentence, even if the usual position for the NP or adverbial or determiner in the sentences would be later. So notice that in (22) *What* comes at the beginning of the sentence even though the preposition it is the object of comes at the end of the sentence. Similarly in indirect questions the interrogative proform must come at the beginning of the indirect question, as in (27).

Relative proforms also distinguish between humans and non-humans and include adverbial proforms as well as pronouns.

Relative	Proforms	Subjective	Objective	Possessor
Pronouns	Human	<i>who</i>	<i>who(m)</i>	<i>whose</i>
	Nonhuman	<i>what</i>	<i>what</i>	<i>whose</i>
in headless relative clauses	Human	<i>whoever</i>	<i>whoever</i>	<i>whosever</i>
	Nonhuman	<i>what(ever)</i>	<i>what(ever)</i>	<i>whosever</i>
				No case
Adverbial	Place		<i>where</i>	
	Time		<i>when</i>	
	Reason		<i>why</i>	

Relative proforms are restricted to occurring inside relative clauses.⁴ Relative clauses modify nouns (and occasionally pronouns) by taking a proposition which includes the noun or pronoun as a participant and putting the clause right after the head it modifies with either a relative proform with the head as its antecedent inside the relative clause or a gap where the NP referring to the head would be. We’re only interested at this point in the relative clauses which contain relative proforms:

- 23. The woman *who* told me about the problem works at the bank.
- 24. a. The children *to whom* I gave the toys are playing over there.
 b. The children *who(m)* I gave the toys to are playing over there.
- 25. I loaned Barbara the book *which* I had brought along.
- 26. The place *where* I live is on top of a hill.
- 27. I remember the exact moment *when* the truth became clear to me.

As with interrogative proforms, relative proforms are restricted to occurring in the first phrase within their clause (in this case the relative clause) regardless of their syntactic role in the clause (so in (28) the relative proform is the subject, in (29) the object of a preposition, in (30) the direct object, in (31-32) adverbials).

⁴ Again, we’ll talk more about relative clauses later when we talk about complex sentences. We’ll just consider them briefly here.

Indefinite pronouns contrast only in gender and number (in form since they have non-specific reference).

	Human	Nonhuman	Dual	Mass/Plural
Universal	<i>everyone, everybody, each</i>	<i>everything, each</i>	<i>both</i>	<i>all</i>
Negative Partitive	<i>no one, nobody</i>	<i>nothing</i>	<i>neither</i>	<i>none</i>
Assertive Partitive	<i>someone, somebody</i>	<i>something</i>		<i>some</i>
Non-assertive Partitive	<i>anyone, anybody</i>	<i>anything</i>		<i>any</i>

Like *wh-* pronouns, indefinite pronouns use different forms to refer to humans and nonhumans – we distinguish between people and things. (Different people treat animals of various kinds either as humans or not, depending on their world view.) Indefinite pronouns maintain the remnants of an older number marking system that distinguished duals (forms which mark twos, as opposed to singulars and plurals (which indicates more than two when in a system with duals)).

There are two classes of indefinite pronouns: simple (monomorphemic) and compound (containing more than one root). The compound indefinite pronouns can be modified with following adjective phrases, while the simple ones cannot be modified by any adjective phrases.

28. Everyone smart did well in that class.

29. *All smart did well in that class/*Smart all did well in that class.

30. Something really strange happened.

31. *Some really strange happened/*Really strange some happened.

Indefinite pronouns of both kinds are often modified by prepositional phrases, as in

32. Everybody in the class did really well on the test.

33. All of the students did really well on the test.

We also distributed *any* and *some* forms differently based on whether the sentence is negative or a question as opposed to anything positive or non-questions, so we say

34. I saw someone.

but not

35. *I saw anyone.

The *any* forms do not usually appear in positive sentences, except in the sense of “every” so

36. Anyone can do it.

37. I will give a job to anyone who wants one.

But in the sense of some unspecified individual, *anyone* is better in questions and negatives.

38. I didn’t see anyone.

39. Did you see anyone?

On the other hand, *someone* is possible in questions and negatives, as in

40. I didn't see someone.

41. Did you see someone?

with a slightly different sense.

Numbers can be used pronominally, as in

42. Let's get some hotdogs. I want two.

43. Oscar planted six trees, but only three actually came up.

44. Six of those boys were hanging out on the corner last night.

One is a special case. There are several *one* proforms. There is the *one* pronoun, which acts like a personal pronoun with indefinite reference, as in

45. One should always do one's best.

(In more casual style, this kind of sentence uses *you* as in *You should always do your best*.) This form has a parallel reflexive form *oneself*, as in

46. One must look after oneself and one's own interests.

Another *one* proform is the number *one*, exactly parallel to other numbers as in

47. Let's get some hotdogs. I want one.

48. Oscar planted six trees, but only one actually came up.

49. One of those boys was hanging out on the corner last night.

The last proform *one*, called by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973)⁵ *replacive one*, is a substitute for a noun (either singular *one* or plural *ones*) and any modifiers of that noun except determiners and predeterminers.

50. Mary bought a red dress, but I liked a blue one better.

51. Mary bought that red dress, and I bought this one. (*one* can mean *dress* or it can mean *red dress*.)

If the indefinite article a would fall right before the *one* it is omitted, as in

52. Mary bought a dress and I bought one too.

53. *Mary bought a dress and I bought a one too.

Modification of Pronouns

Pronouns are typically limited in the ways in which they can be modified. Some pronouns cannot be modified at all, while others can only be modified in certain ways. For example, reflexive pronouns cannot be modified with adjective phrases at all (as exemplified in (59-61),

54. The children were talking to themselves.

55. *The children were talking to playful themselves.

⁵ Quirk, Randolph, and Sidney Greenbaum. 1973. *A concise grammar of contemporary English*

56. *The children were talking to themselves playful

Compound indefinite pronouns can be modified with adjective phrases which follow the pronoun (as exemplified in (62)),

57. The children were talking about something important.

58. *The children were talking about important something.

Personal pronouns are typically not modified by adjective phrases. Occasionally you find something like *poor me* or *wonderful you*, but notice that it is nearly impossible to put those into sentences and indeed you can't use them with subject case or possessive pronouns at all, so

59. *Poor they need help.

60. *Wonderful your intelligence is awe-inspiring.

It really seems like personal and reflexive pronouns (among others) don't really like to be modified with adjective phrases at all. This strongly suggests that one school grammar definition of pronouns is quite wrong: Traditionally pronouns are said to be words that take the place of nouns. We can see that such a description is not appropriate since, of course,

61. Poor orphans need help.

is fine – with *orphans* in the slot where *they* is in (64). Instead it looks like personal pronouns and reflexives can replace not nouns, but whole noun phrases. Since no pronoun can be modified by a determiner (an article *the, a*; a demonstrative *this, that*; words like *some, every*, and possessive NPs) and nouns can be, it really doesn't seem appropriate to suggest that nouns and pronouns are interchangeable. Instead, we can note that both nouns and pronouns can function as the heads of noun phrases. Nouns can typically include a wide range of modifiers in the NP with them, while pronouns have a far more limited range of modifiers possible. Some pronouns allow NO modifiers so only function as complete noun phrases; some pronouns typically occur without any modifiers so usually function as complete noun phrases.

Practice with Pronouns Find each of the pronouns in the paragraph below; then identify each as personal, reflexive, demonstrative, interrogative, relative, or indefinite. (Roll the cursor over a word to see if it is pronoun and if so what kind.)

(a) Who would have believed it? (b) Any of us could have warned the bosses about Henry, but, of course, they never asked us. (c) He made a real fool of himself yesterday, though. (d) He thought that nobody would ever call him on his misbehaviour. (e) He's been in charge in our office so there wasn't anyone in our group who could raise the issue of his horrible behaviour with him. (f) As usual his deafening snoring was hard for us to ignore. (g) Still we would have averted our eyes and paid no attention if we could have pretended he wasn't even in the room, but then he flopped over onto Mary, whose chair was next to his. (h) She shifted herself over as far as she could and he slipped off her shoulder and fell to the ground. (i) Even at that point he went on sleeping. (j) Everybody rushed over to him, and, when we tried to move him, it became obvious that he was as drunk as a skunk. (k) He was a complete dead weight and even with all of us trying, we couldn't move him more than an inch. (l) After a while, we gave up and put the tablecloth over him and left the meeting room. (m) We forgot to lock the door to the conference room and the visiting executive committee had booked the room later that afternoon. (n) I guess I'm glad that I wasn't there when they arrived, but I certainly would like to know how everybody on that committee reacted to the sight of their fair-haired boy, drunk and snoring on the floor. (o) That would have been something to see, wouldn't it?

Nouns

Nouns are major open class words, which like pronouns, serve as heads of noun phrases. Unlike pronouns, nouns are typically modified by a number of different kinds of structures, including determiners and predeterminers. Also unlike pronouns, since nouns are open class words, we cannot just provide a list of them – instead they must be recognized like verbs by the way they behave.

How do they behave? Certain properties distinguish nouns. Typically nouns inflect to mark the number of their own referents. What does this mean? Remember we said that verbs inflected to mark agreement with their subjects in person and number. That change in the form of the verb does not reflect anything about the meaning of the verb – it reflects something about the meaning/structure of something else in the sentence. A change in the form of a noun from *girl* to *girls* does reflect something about the referent of the noun itself – *girl* is used to refer to only one *girl*, usually, while *girls* refers to more than one. If a word changes its form to reflect a change in the number of its own referent, it must be a noun or a pronoun since only nouns and pronouns inflect to mark the number of their own referents. Pronouns belong to a closed class, so words that inflect to mark the number of their own referents which are not on the list of pronouns, must be nouns. It would be really swell if that meant all we had to do was see if a noun inflected or otherwise showed number marking that reflected the number of their own referents. But no, life or rather English is not that simple. Not all nouns show this kind of change. Some nouns are fixed for number: they may always be plural, like *pants* or *scissors*, or they may always be singular, like many noncount nouns like *wheat* or *amazement*. Some nouns do not show the change in form to mark number, but trigger different agreements depending on whether they are viewed as singular or plural: *That sheep was sick* vs. *Those sheep were sick*.

Another way to distinguish nouns is to note that they can be modified by articles like *the* and *a*, demonstratives like *this* and *that*, and other determiners like *some*, *each*, *every*, etc. Adjectives as well can appear with determiners and no head noun, as in *Only the brave deserve the fair*. However, we can distinguish adjectives from nouns because not all determiners can be used with adjectives, so we can't talk about *a beautiful*, but we can talk about *a beauty*. Moreover, adjectives can be modified by adverb phrases like *very*, *amazingly*, or *really*, but nouns cannot. You can talk about *the amazingly tall*, but not about **the amazingly height*; you can talk about **the terribly poor*, but not **the terribly paupers* or **the terribly poverty*. Adjective phrases can modify nouns, but not adjectives: so you can talk about *the amazing height*, but not about **the amazing tall*.

Properties of Nouns

Nouns typically inflect mark the number of their own referents.		Only nouns and adjectives can be modified by determiners.	
Nouns share this property with some pronouns. For example, personal pronouns mark the number of their referents	Some nouns are fixed for number (for example, <i>scissors</i> is always plural).	Adjectives can only be modified by a limited set of determiners. For example, <i>the good</i> is fine, but <i>*a good</i> is not.	Adjectives can be modified by adverb phrases like <i>very</i> or <i>amazingly</i> , and nouns cannot--so <i>the amazingly rich</i> , but not <i>*the amazingly millionaire</i> .

Ultimately though we must come back to feature we started with, nouns and pronouns function as the heads of noun phrases and pronouns are a closed class, so all non-pronominal heads of NPs must be nouns. So we can set up slots that can be filled by words which are unambiguously nouns since they mark number or can be modified by determiners and we can see what other words can fit in those slots.

Lets consider sentences like

62. Everybody talked about those cats.

63. A house fell down.

64. Facts may be hard to find.

We can see that even nouns which are fixed for number like *pants* or *wheat* or *Suzette* can fit in some of these slots:

65. Everybody talked about those pants.

66. Wheat may be hard to find.

67. Suzette may be hard to find.

It turns out that as we consider these slots, that there are regular patterns as to what kinds of nouns can occur in particular structures. Nouns have been traditionally split into several categories or classes.

Noun Classes

The first break is between nouns which have unique reference (and are therefore always specific and definite) and those which do not (which name classes and which might be either specific or not, definite or not). Those with unique reference are called proper nouns (though they might better be called proper NPs) and those without are called common nouns. The difference between a proper noun and a common noun might be illustrated with *George Washington* and *the first president of the United States*. Both of these NPs refer to the same individual, but the first names that specific individual because that name is expected to have the hearer pick out the referent without considering a whole set or class of people. In the second NP, *president* – even *president of the United States* names a class of people; the NP expects us to select the correct individual from the entire class of presidents. *President* is a common noun; *George Washington* is a proper noun (in most uses).

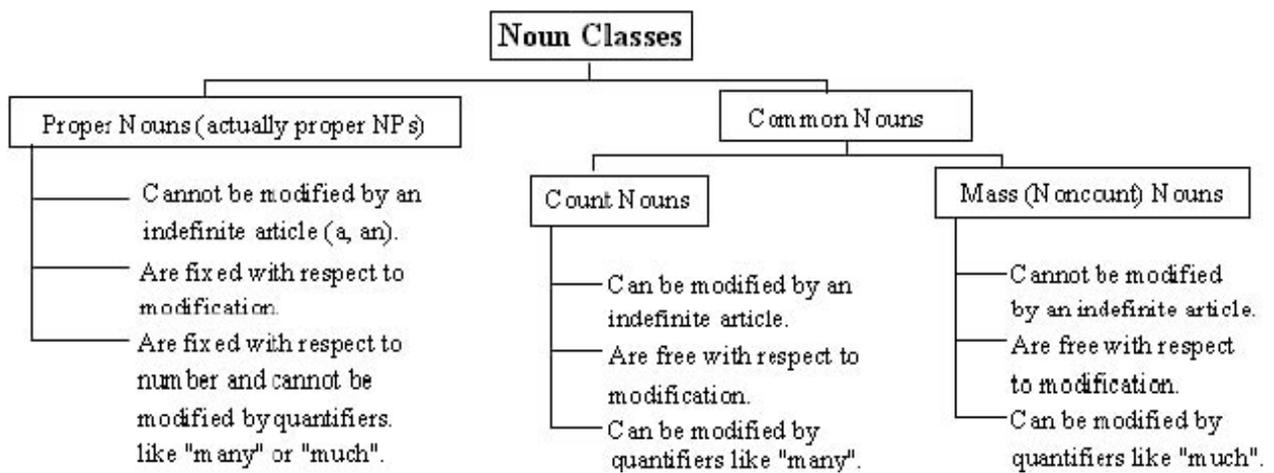


Table 2: Classes of Nouns

Proper nouns can never be modified by an indefinite article (*a* or *an*) because they must be definite. In fact, they are fixed with respect to modification – some proper nouns require the presence of a definite article (*the Hague, the Seychelles*) and some preclude the presence of a definite article (*Paris, Hawaii*). Proper nouns are fixed with respect to number – some are fixed singular (*the Hague*) and some are fixed plural (*the Bahamas*). You can't talk about *the Hagues* or *the Bahama*. You can't use quantifiers with proper nouns so you can't visit *many Bahamas*.

Common nouns come in three types: count, noncount or mass, and both. A count noun, like *noun*, can be modified by an indefinite article; it is free with respect to modifiers and the plural form can be modified with quantifiers like *many* or *few*. So you can say *a noun* or *many nouns* or *few nouns*, while noncount nouns, like *wheat* or *gratitude*, cannot be modified with an indefinite article *a* or *an*: You can't **harvest a wheat* or **feel a gratitude*. To express an indefinite mass/noncount noun, you use no article at all: You *harvest wheat* or *feel gratitude*. Singular count nouns require the presence of a determiner of some kind: You can *suggest a noun*, but you cannot **suggest noun*. Plural count nouns occur without an article if they are indefinite: You can *suggest nouns*. Noncount or mass nouns do not have plurals – so you can't *harvest wheats* or *feel gratitudes*. Simply, count nouns can be counted: *one bean, two beans, three beans*, etc., even those which are fixed in number *two people, three people*, etc.; however, mass/noncount nouns cannot be counted: **one wheat, *two wheat(s)*, etc.

Some common nouns can be either count or mass (usually with slightly different meanings), so you can *like cakes* or *like cake*. In the first version, you like individual cakes; in the second, you like undifferentiated cake. If you order *pizza* (mass/noncount), you have ordered at least one pizza but you haven't specified how many; if you order *a pizza* (count), you have ordered only one pizza; if you order *pizzas* (count), you have ordered more than one pizza.

Table 3: Cooccurrence Possibilities in Noun Phrases of Different Types

Proper			Common		
			Count	NonCount/Mass	Both
Mary	*Bahama	*White House	*tree	music	cake
*the Mary	*the Bahama	the White House	the tree	the music	the cake
*a Mary	*a Bahama	*a White House	a tree	*a music	a cake
*some Mary	*some Bahama	*some White House	*some tree	some music	some cake
*Marys	*Bahamas	*White Houses	trees	*musics	cakes
*the Marys	the Bahamas	*the White Houses	the trees	*the musics	the cakes
*much Mary	*much Bahama	*much White House	*much tree	much music	much cake
*much Marys	*much Bahamas	*much White Houses	*much trees	*much musics	*much cakes

(*some* (here) means an unspecified amount as opposed to some individual or other.)

In Table 3 above, you can see the co-occurrence possibilities. The kind of noun it is limits the kind of determiner and quantifiers it can be modified by and what numbers it can be found in.

Practice Identifying Nouns and Pronouns

1. Pick out each noun in the sentences below and identify the class to which it belongs. Move the cursor the word you are identifying to check your answer.

- a. Susan might help that little old man.
- b. I really need help.
- c. That child wants an ice cream.
- d. Did Charley buy that furniture at a Goodwill?
- e. Could I have some water?
- f. Those people need six waters.
- g. We must look after the water.

2. Pick out all the nouns and pronouns in the sentences below and identify the classes to which they belong. Check your answers by moving the cursor over each word.

(a) The Christian descendants of Germanic raiders who had looted, pillaged, and finally taken the land of Britain were themselves to undergo harassment from other Germanic invaders, beginning in the later years of the eighth century, when Viking raiders sacked various churches and monasteries, including Lindisfarne and Bede's own beloved Jarrow.

(b) During the first half of the following century other more or less disorganized but disastrous raids occurred in the south. (c) Then in 865 a great and expertly organized army landed in East Anglia, led by Ivar the Boneless and his brother Halfdan, sons of Ragnar Lothbroke. (d) During the next fifteen years the Vikings gained possession of practically the whole eastern part of England.

(e) In 870 the Vikings attacked Wessex, ruled by Ethelred with the able assistance of his brother Alfred, who was to succeed him in the following year. (f) After years of discouragement, very few victories, and many crushing defeats, Alfred in 878 won a signal victory at Edington over Guthrum, the Danish king of East Anglia, who promised not only to depart from Wessex but also to be baptized.

(adapted from Pyles and Algeo, *The Origins and Development of the English Language*: 99)

Nouns can be modified by a range of different structures (adjective phrases, clauses, prepositional phrases, determiners and predeterminers); we're going to start by discussing determiners and then predeterminers. The next section is on modifiers and complements of other types in simple sentences and later sections will deal with clausal modifiers.

Determiners

The prototypical determiners are articles. The definite article is *the*; the indefinite article is *a*. The difference between *the animal* and *an animal* is a difference in definiteness. A definite noun phrase is used when a speaker expects addressees to be able to pick out the referent for the noun phrase. When does a speaker have such an expectation?

- o When the referent has already been mentioned in the conversation or piece of writing (so we can discuss *the speaker* because we just mentioned the speaker)
- o When the referent is in plain sight of the conversation participants (so we can discuss *the table below* because we can both see it)
- o When the referent is attached to an already established referent (so we can discuss *the video card in your computer*, since *your computer* must be your sight now — the video card probably isn't, but it's a part of something you can pick out the referent for)
- o When the referent is non-specific, but represents the entire class (so we can discuss *the lion*, meaning lions as opposed to other animals, for example, as in *The lion typically lives in a pride*, which does not refer to a specific lion, but generically to all lions)

So, we use an indefinite noun phrase when the speaker does not expect the addressees to be able to pick out a referent. Sometimes a speaker may have a particular referent in mind and sometimes he or she may not, so if the speaker says

68. I want a new car.

He or she may just be expressing a generalized desire to replace his or her present vehicle or he or she may be thinking "I want a new car — that Jag I saw on the showroom yesterday is what I really want!".

The indefinite article is limited to occurring with singular count nouns. This restriction doubtless arises from the fact that the indefinite article *a(n)* is a descendant of the number *one*, restricting its role to modifying nouns which can co-occur with numbers (count nouns) and to nouns which *one* would be an appropriate modifier of (singular nouns).

Articles	Universal	Wh-
<i>the</i> (definite)	<i>every</i>	<i>which</i>
<i>a/an</i> (indefinite)	<i>each</i>	<i>what</i>
Demonstratives	Negative: <i>no</i>	<i>whichever</i>
<i>this/these</i>	Universal dual: <i>either</i>	Possessive Noun Phrases
<i>that/those</i>	Negative dual: <i>neither</i>	
	General assertive: <i>some</i>	
	General nonassertive: <i>any</i>	

A plural indefinite noun phrase or an indefinite noncount/mass noun typically occurs without an article at all, as in

69. I want new furniture. (*furniture* = noncount/mass noun)

70. I want new chairs. (*chairs* = plural count noun)

It is possible to use indefinite NPs, either singular or plural, generically, as in

71. A lion lives in a pride.

72. Lions live in prides/a pride.

(In fact, as you can see, the only form of NP that can't be use generically is a definite plural -- *The lions live in (the) prides* cannot be interpreted as generic.)

Articles are not the only determiners -- other words and phrases come in the same slot in a noun phrase and are mutually exclusive. You can only have one determiner per noun modified. Demonstrative determiners agree with the nouns they modify in number. Demonstrative determiners have the same pointing effects that demonstrative pronouns have. The near demonstrative determiner has, however, acquired another use recently. *This* and *these* are used in casual speech as markers of specific indefinites. So when people say something like

73. I met this guy in Victorian Lit last term

they do not typically mean a definite guy nearby -- they mean a specific guy that they don't expect the addressees to have an established referent for.

The other word-level determiners include a range of quantifying determiners (*each, every, neither, either, no, some, any*) and *wh-* determiners (which occur in questions and relative clauses: *which, what, whichever*). Beyond these there are phrase-level determiners: possessive noun phrases (whether they are just pronouns or longer noun phrases with noun heads) typically serve as determiners. We'll discuss these determiners after we've looked at predeterminers.

Predeterminers: *all, both, half*, multipliers (including fractions)

Like determiners, you can also only have one predeterminer per noun modified. As you might guess from the name, a predeterminer is a noun modifier that precedes the determiner.

The order of constituents in a noun phrase before the noun head is Predeterminer - Determiner - Adjective Phrases - N:

74. All the large, very ferocious dogs

75. Half the stolen money

76. Both the small children

Demonstratives (which you recall can function as pronouns) can also function as determiners, as in

77. All those ferocious dogs are barking.

78. The FBI found half that stolen money.

It is impossible to use both an article and another determiner -- **All those the dogs*, **All the those dogs*, **The that money*, **That the money*. We can see that predeterminers do not belong to the same category as determiners. School grammars sometimes try to treat predeterminers as adjectives, as part of a general simplification that treats a number of noun modifiers as adjectives. We can see that predeterminers are quite a small closed class that is not interchangeable with adjectives: so **those all dogs* and **ferocious the dogs* are quite impossible.

Back to Determiners

The determiners which are quantificational (*each, every, neither, either, no, some, any*) cannot co-occur with each other or with any other determiner, but also can co-occur with the predeterminers (which are also quantificational -- as you can see by looking at the list of predeterminers in Table 2).

79. Every child likes some ice cream.

80. **Every the child likes some ice cream.*

81. **The every child likes some ice cream.*

82. **Every child likes half some ice cream.*

Possessive NPs come in the same slot and are clearly determiners. School grammars tend to treat possessive pronouns as adjectives. It is clear, however, that possessive pronouns and demonstratives, among others, act more like articles than like adjective phrases. That reflects the slot they come in in the NP:

83. Both their ferocious dogs are barking at all Mary's children.

84. All that man's friends came to the party.

In (88) we can see that the determiner for *dogs* is *their* and for *children* is *Mary's*. In (89), *that* must modify *man's*, not *friends*, since *that* must modify a singular noun and *man* is singular and *friends* is plural. Therefore the determiner of *friends* must be *that man's* and *all* is a predeterminer modifying *friends* (since you can't talk about *all the man*). All adjective phrases used to modify *friends* must come after *man's*. The slot between the predeterminer and adjective phrases is otherwise only filled by determiners.

85. Those children's mother's doctor's car broke down.

So in (90) the determiners are *those children's mother's doctor's* (for *dog*), *those children's mother's* (for *doctor*), *those children's* (for *mother*) and *those* (for *children*).

Practice: Pick out the noun phrases and identify all the predeterminers, determiners, nouns and pronouns.

1. All the children are in the other room.
 2. The first three students should pass out the books.
 3. No other person should touch that picture.
 4. The children's teacher likes them.
 5. The child's teacher's mother's dog bit the principal.
 6. Half those books lack a third page.
-

More about Nouns

Now that we've established some facts about nouns and some noun modifiers, we can see that there are a number of ways to identify nouns. Once set of possible questions to ask can be seen in figure 1

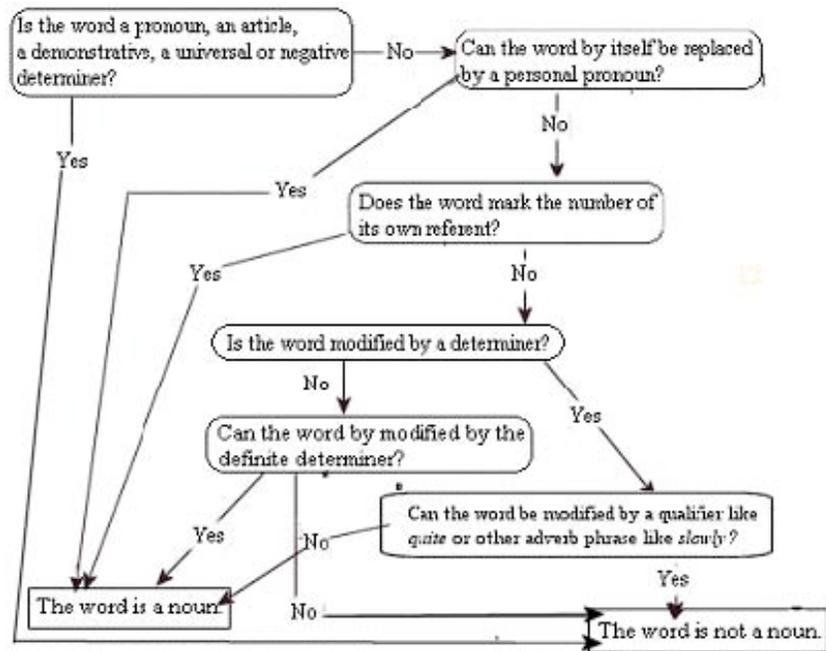


Figure 1: Noun Decision Tree

Example: *Charley donated a lot of money to the poor.*

1. Is *Charley* a pronoun, article, etc.? No. Can *Charley* by itself be replaced by a personal pronoun? Yes: *He donated a lot of money to the poor.* So *Charley* is a noun.
2. Is *lot* a pronoun, article, etc.? No. Can *lot* by itself be replaced by personal pronoun? No: **Charley donated a(n) it of money to the poor.* So can it inflect to mark the plurality of its referent? Yes: *Charley donated lots of money to the poor.* So *lot* is a noun.
3. Is *money* a pronoun, article, etc.? No. Can *money* by itself be replaced by a personal pronoun? Yes: *Charley donated a lot of it to the poor.* So *money* is a noun.
4. Can *poor* by itself be replaced by a personal pronoun? No: **Charley donated a lot of money to the them.* So can *poor* mark the plurality of its referent? No: **Charley donated a lot of money to the poors.* So can *poor* be modified by quite? Yes: *Charley donated a lot of money to the quite poor.* So *poor* is not a noun.
5. *donated* is not a pronoun, article, etc. Can it be replaced by a personal pronoun? No. Does it mark the number of its own referent? No. Is it modified by a determiner? No. Can the word be modified by the definite determiner? No. It is definitely not a noun.
6. *a* and *the* are articles, so they cannot be nouns.
7. *of* and *to* are not pronouns, articles, etc. Can they be replaced by a personal pronoun? No. Do they mark the number of their own referent? No. Are they modified by determiners? No. Can the words be modified by definite determiners? No. They are definitely not nouns.

Example: *They say that a rolling stone gathers no moss.*

1. *They* is a pronoun, so it is not a noun.
2. Is *stone* a pronoun, article, etc.? No. Can it be replaced by a personal pronoun? No, **a rolling it.* Does it mark the number of its own referent? Yes. This word is a noun.
3. Is *moss* a pronoun, article, etc.? No. Can it be replaced by a personal pronoun? No, **no it.* Does it mark the number of its own referent? No. Is the word modified by a determiner? Yes. Can it be modified by an adverb phrase? No. This word is a noun.
4. *a* and *no* are an article and a negative determiner -- they cannot be nouns.
5. *that* is not a pronoun, article, etc. It cannot be replaced by a personal pronoun. It does not mark the number of its own referent. It is not and cannot be modified by a determiner. It is not a noun.
6. *say* and *gathers* are not pronouns, articles, etc. Can they be replaced by a personal pronoun? No. Do they mark the number of their own referent? No. Are they modified by determiners? No. Can the words be modified by definite determiners? No. They are definitely not nouns.
7. *rolling* is not a pronoun, article, etc. It cannot be replaced by a personal pronoun. It does not mark the number of its own referent. It is not be modified by a determiner. It could be modified by a definite determiner (*the rolling never gather moss*), but if so it could be modified by an adverb phrase (*the slowly rolling never gather moss*) so it is not a noun.

PRACTICE ANALYSIS: Identifying Nouns, Pronouns, Determiners and Predeterminers

1. Nouns:
 - a. Underline each of the nouns in the text below.
 - b. Identify each underlined noun as common count, common mass or proper.
2. Pronouns
 - a. Circle each of the pronouns in the text below.
 - b. Identify each circled pronoun as personal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, reflexive, interrogative or number.
3. Determiners
 - a. Double underline each determiner in the text below.
4. Predeterminers
 - a. Put a box around each predeterminer in the text below.

Report of the 1/26/2005 Incident

I have been asked by members of the board and the president of the company to provide a complete account of yesterday's unfortunate events at the branch office in Springfield.

Background: Oscar Anderson was appointed by the main office to serve as the "formal liason" between the branch office and the main office on 10 January 2005. He started in Springfield the next day with a complex set of requirements including the largest office in the branch, the exclusive services of the branch manager's administrative assistants and direct reports from all the supervisors.

On receipt of these demands, Ms. Angela James, the branch manager, sent a query up the line about them. The home office responded with an e-mail apparently from the president of the company, Mr. John Clareton, stating that all of Mr. Anderson's needs must be met immediately and without further discussion. The e-mail directed Ms. James not to send anything more about Mr. Anderson to anyone in the main office; all further communications from the branch office should come from Mr. Anderson. (See attachment 1 (copies of the e-mail interaction between Ms. James and the head office).) Therefore, Ms. James gave Mr. Anderson her office and her administrative staff; she moved into an administrative office down the hall; she instructed each

of the supervisors to copy Mr. Anderson on all memos and reports. Mr. Anderson then called a meeting of all the supervisors and ordered them to send their reports directly to him, with no copies to Ms. James. Surprised, the supervisors met with Ms. James, who told them to follow Mr. Anderson's instructions to the letter, but to keep copies of all documents they sent to Mr. Anderson and received from him.

Ms. James asked Mr. Anderson for a meeting, which he refused. Ms. James wrote Mr. Anderson a memo asking him to outline her new responsibilities since she no longer had any staff reporting to her. Mr. Anderson told her to "be grateful she still had a job." This was very confusing since the branch office had been running smoothly and with many commendations from the head office for the entire three years Ms. James had been in charge. Ms. James sent Mr. Anderson a second memo asking for clarification; Mr. Anderson responded by saying, "Ms. James should never have been appointed to such a senior position; it is inappropriate for a person like her to have authority over supervisors." He further stated that if she sent him one more word on this subject, he would arrange never to hear from her again. Ms. James interpreted this statement as meaning that he would arrange for her employment to be terminated. (See attachment 2 (copies of the memo interaction between Ms. James and Mr. Anderson and of the contemporaneous summary memo by Ms. James).)

By the fifth day of Mr. Anderson's tenure in the branch office, he had insulted every employee in the office and three of the lower level employees had resigned. It speaks well for the professionalism of the employees in the branch office that the office continued to work relatively smoothly. It speaks well for the good sense of the supervisors that, when they needed instruction or assistance, they went to Ms. James, not Mr. Anderson and that they intervened between Mr. Anderson and their teammates generally attempting to protect the lower-level employees from

the ill-feeling created by Mr. Anderson's offensive behavior. (See attachment 3 (the supervisors' reports) and attachment 4 (the joint report of the lower level employees).)

Starting on the sixth day of his tenure, Mr. Anderson began arriving to work later each day until by January 23rd, he was arriving after lunch. He often came in apparently smelling of alcohol and making even less sense than he usually did. The only work he did was to dictate reports to the head office detailing changes he had made to system in the branch office and claiming that these changes (if they were not undercut by the "incompetents working in the branch office") would result in immediate increases in revenue to the main office. He delegated all his other work to his administrative staff. Since they were not insufficiently directed to carry out his duties, they went to Ms. James for advice. Thus the office continued to run as it had in the past.

On the morning of January 25th, a memo arrived at the office, addressed Mr. Anderson and stating that the board would be holding a special video conference with the branch office the next day so the board members could observe for themselves the improvements Mr. Anderson's system had wrought. They instructed Mr. Anderson to set up a video conference in the main meeting room with all the supervisors, Ms. James, and Mr. Anderson himself. Since it arrived in the morning, it was put in the pile of Mr. Anderson's correspondence. When Mr. Anderson had not arrived by 3 p.m., the administrative staff made every effort to contact him, leaving messages on his voicemail and several text messages. (See attachment 4 (the office call log and telephone records).)

The events of 1/26/2005: When Mr. Anderson had not returned their calls by 9 a.m. the next day, the office manager went to Ms. James with the memo. On reading the memo, Ms. James send out messages to all the supervisors notifying them of the meeting and requesting that they bring their documentation of the all the events of the last 10 days. She contacted the technical

administrator to set up the video equipment for the conference in the main meeting room. She instructed the administrative staff to make every effort to contact Mr. Anderson, including sending out junior staff members to his apartment and to all the restaurants near his apartment and near the office.

By 12:45 the video conference was set up, the supervisors were present in the main office with their documents, and Ms. James was going through her own documents at the head of the table. At 1 p.m. the conference call began with Ms. James apologizing for Mr. Anderson's absence. At 1:02 Mr. Anderson walked through the front door of the office. The receptionist told him that there was a staff meeting going on in the main office. Mr. Anderson began to shout furiously, demanding to know who other than himself could call a staff meeting and claiming that people were plotting against him behind his back. He flung open the door of the main office and staggered over to Ms. James and demanded to know who she thought she was calling a meeting at this branch. He insisted that this branch was **his branch** and that only he and nobody else, not even "those dopes on the board" could call a meeting at his branch. Ms. James gestured politely toward the video equipment. Mr. Anderson turned his head toward the camera and promptly vomited on the desk in front of the entire board. Ms. James attempted to explain to him that this was a meeting called by the board, when he vomited again on the floor. Moving toward Ms. James in a threatening way, he slipped in his own vomit and fell to the floor hitting his head on a chair on the way down. Ms. James apologized to the members of the board, saying that Mr. Anderson was clearly unwell and then began to dial 911. Ms. James asked for a emergency services to help the unconscious Mr. Anderson and signalled to the technician to turn off the video camera. (See attachment 5 (the video footage of 1/26/2005).)

When Mr. Anderson reached consciousness again, he announces that he had been poisoned and

insisted that the medical report of his accident be sent to the main office. Unfortunately for Mr. Anderson, besides the mild concussion he suffered, his only other observable symptom was a blood alcohol level of .23. (See attachment 6 (the medical report of 1/26/2005).)

Conclusions: Mr. Anderson is currently in the hospital and will be sent to rehabilitation when he is discharged from the hospital. Ms. James has been returned to her office and the structure of the office has been returned to its previous form.

The only open questions in this sorry affair are

(1) Who sent the e-mail to Ms. James, since the president denies having sent it (and would have no reason to send it)?

(2) How was Mr. Anderson ever hired with background of serious alcoholic misconduct? (See attachment 7 (the transcripts of my discussions with Mr. Anderson's prior employers).)

(3) Who in the main office is ultimately responsible for cutting off all communication between the two offices thus enabling Mr. Anderson to change his position from liason (at which he was clearly not competent) to actual head of the branch office (at which he failed even more drastically)?
