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

**Australia** is a noun. **Fun** is a noun.

There are many kinds of nouns. The four main ones are: **common nouns**, **proper nouns**, **abstract nouns** and **collective nouns**.

**Common noun**
A common noun is the name of any ordinary thing you can see and touch.

Here are some examples of common nouns:

- dog
- hat
- ball
- water
- apple
- car

The toy **dog** is made of metal.

**Proper noun**
A proper noun is the special name of a person, place or thing. Proper nouns start with capital letters.

Here are some examples of proper nouns:

- Mia
- Canberra
- Sydney Opera House
- Captain Cook
- China

The **Sydney Opera House** is big.

**Collective nouns**
A collective noun is the name given to a group of persons or things.

Here are some examples of collective nouns:

- team
- herd
- swarm
- litter
- bunch
- flock

A **litter** of puppies.

**Other types of nouns**

**Abstract nouns**
An abstract noun is the name of something you feel, or something that could exist in your mind. You cannot see or touch an abstract noun.

Here are some examples of abstract nouns:

- hope
- sadness
- joy
- truth
- love
- kindness
- greed
- idea

**Concrete nouns**
A concrete noun is a noun that you can see or touch, like tree, hat or nose. It is the opposite of an abstract noun.
Here are some examples of concrete nouns:

- floor
- man
- hill
- ocean
- ball
- head

A concrete noun is a type of common noun.

**Technical nouns**

A technical noun is a noun that is used in a specific area of study. We only tend to use technical nouns when we are speaking or writing about particular topics.

Here are some examples of technical nouns:

- fraction
- oxygen
- galaxy
- triceratops

Non-technical nouns are also called *everyday nouns.*

A bear is a large **mammal.**

**Technical noun**

**Terms-of-address nouns**

A term-of-address noun is a noun we use when we are talking or writing to someone. It is a special type of proper noun.

Here are some examples of terms-of-address nouns:

- Mrs Chin
- Alex
- Your Honour
- Sir

**Count or countable nouns**

A count or countable noun is a noun that can be counted, such as *apple, leg or dog.*

- We saw three **dolphins.**
- I like **apples.**

**Mass or non-countable nouns**

A mass or non-countable noun is a noun that cannot be counted, such as *fun, traffic or homework.* For example:

- You might say: The teacher gave us **more homework.** ✓
- But you would never say: The teacher gave me **three homeworks.** x

What heavy **traffic!**

**Mass or non-countable noun**

**Verbal nouns (Gerunds)**

Sometimes, a word can have more than one ‘job’. A verbal noun, or gerund, is a verb ending in *-ing* that is used as a noun. In other words, it is an action word that is used to name something. *(See Verbs, pp. 17–29.)*

**REMEMBER**

A verb is a doing, being or having word!

- **Running** is good exercise. In this sentence, **running** is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb *to run,* but acts like a noun. It is the subject of the verb is.
- I like **eating.** In this sentence, **eating** is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb *to eat,* but acts like a noun. It is the object of the verb *like.*
I am good at dancing. In this sentence, dancing is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb to dance, but acts like a noun. It is the object of the preposition at.

I went on a walking tour. In this sentence, walking is a participle. It acts as an adjective, describing the noun tour.

Modal nouns
A modal noun shows a degree of possibility, certainty or obligation. That is, something that is possible, certain, or that you should do.
Here are some examples of modal nouns:

probability certainty necessity chance

Compound nouns
A compound noun is made up of two or more words. These words may be joined together, as in teabag or snowman; or hyphenated, as in self-control or brother-in-law.
These are compound nouns:

bookshelf thumbnail goldfish
knife-edge half-brother sister-in-law

Sometimes when a group of words has a special meaning, we call them compound nouns, even though they are not joined together and do not have a hyphen. Baked beans and human being are compound nouns.

Noun group
A noun group is a word or a number of words based around a noun. It can consist of a single noun, a single pronoun, or a single noun with words built around the noun. A noun group can also include a clause. (See Groups, p. 38, Clauses, p. 42.)
In the following sentences, the noun groups are highlighted:

REMEMBER
A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. Pronouns include words like he, she, I, me, you, they, them.

Dogs bark.
They bark.
Those dogs bark.
Those big dogs bark.
Those big dogs that live next door bark.

Noun groups are sometimes called nominal groups or noun phrases.

Noun phrase
A noun phrase is a phrase that does the work of a noun. (See Phrases, p. 38.)
These are noun phrases:

eating apples
going fishing

Playing tennis is fun!

Noun phrase
Noun clause
A noun clause is a subordinate clause that does the work of a noun. It can be either the subject or the object of a verb. A noun clause contains a subject and a verb of its own, but does not make sense by itself. (See Clauses, p. 42, Finite verbs, p. 20, Subject and object, p. 6.)

REMEMBER
A principal clause is a group of words that makes sense on its own. A subordinate clause is a group of words that gives meaning to the main clause of a sentence, but it cannot stand on its own.

What I saw at the movies was scary.
In this sentence, What I saw at the movies is a noun clause. It contains a subject (I) and a verb (saw), but it does not make sense on its own.

You must see the game that is on TV tonight.
In this sentence, the game that is on TV tonight is a noun clause. It contains a subject (the game) and a verb (is), but it does not make sense on its own.

More about nouns

Person
Nouns and pronouns have person. There are three types of person: first person, second person and third person.

- **First person** refers to the person who is speaking: I, me, mine, etc.
- **Second person** refers to the person who is being spoken to: You, yours, etc.
- **Third person** refers to the person being spoken about: he, she, it, mum, dad, Tom, etc.

The superhero is flying.

Third person
All nouns are in the third person. They are always ‘spoken about’. (See More about Pronouns, p. 11.)

Number
A noun has number. It can be singular or plural. Singular means one. Plural means more than one.

apple singular apples plural

Forming the plural
In English spelling, the plural is formed in different ways. Always use your dictionary to check, if you are not sure.

Many singular nouns add -s to make the plural:

- boy ➔ boys
- girl ➔ girls
- toy ➔ toys

Others add -es:

- beach ➔ beaches
- fox ➔ foxes
- church ➔ churches

If a noun ends in y and has a consonant before the y, the plural drops -y and adds -ies:

- baby ➔ babies
- lady ➔ ladies
- ruby ➔ rubies
Nouns ending in -f or -fe make the plural in two ways.

- They add -s:
  - chief ➔ chiefs
  - roof ➔ roofs
- They change -f to -v and add -es:
  - knife ➔ knives
  - loaf ➔ loaves

In some cases, both plural forms are acceptable:
  - handkerchief ➔ handkerchefs ➔ handkerchieves
  - hoof ➔ hoofs ➔ hooves

Nouns ending in -o form the plural in two ways.

- They add -s:
  - piano ➔ pianos
  - merino ➔ merinos
- They add -es:
  - potato ➔ potatoes
  - tomato ➔ tomatoes

Compound nouns form the plural in two ways.

- They add -s to the end of the compound:
  - spoonful ➔ spoonfuls
- They add -s to the first part of the compound:
  - sister-in-law ➔ sisters-in-law

Some singular nouns that come from foreign words change their endings altogether:

- crisis ➔ crises
- plateau ➔ plateaux

Some singular nouns change their vowels to form the plural:

- woman ➔ women
- man ➔ men

Sometimes they change their consonants as well:

- mouse ➔ mice
- louse ➔ lice

Some singular nouns do not change to form the plural at all:

- deer ➔ deer
- sheep ➔ sheep

**Gender**

Nouns can be *masculine* (male) or *feminine* (female).

Some nouns are neither masculine nor feminine. These are called *neuter*. Masculine, feminine and neuter are a noun’s gender.

Some nouns can be either masculine or feminine. These nouns are said to be *common gender*.

---

**EXAMPLES OF NOUNS AND THEIR GENDER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Common gender</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>human</td>
<td>tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>parent</td>
<td>drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nominalisation
Nominalisation is the process of making nouns from other parts of speech. For example, the verb *lose* becomes *loss*; the adjective *high* becomes *height*; the verb *dwell* becomes *dwelling*.

Some words can be nouns or verbs, depending on what their job is in a sentence. For example, the word *jump* can mean ‘a jump’ (noun) or ‘to jump’ (verb).

I did a huge *jump* on a trampoline.  
I like *to jump* on a trampoline.

Noun       Verb

Case
Nouns and pronouns have case. Case refers to the relationship between nouns (or pronouns) and verbs. *(See Pronouns, below.)*

There are three main cases:

- The *subjective case* refers to the subject of a verb. The subjective case is sometimes called the *nominative case*.
- The *objective case* refers to the object of a verb or preposition. The objective case is sometimes called the *accusative case*.
- The *possessive case* shows ownership of something.

In this sentence, Ahmed is in the subjective case. It is the subject of the verb *borrowed*. Book is in the objective case. It is the object of the verb *borrowed*. Stephen’s is in the possessive case. It tells us who owns the book.

**REMEMBER**
The subject is the person or thing who performs the action of the verb.  
The object is the person or thing who has the action of the verb done to them.

How do we find the case of a noun?

| Subjective case | Ask *who* or *what* in front of the verb.  
Who borrowed the book?  
Answer: Ahmed |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Objective case  | Ask *who* or *what* after the verb.  
Borrowed *what*?  
Answer: the book |
| Possessive case | Ask *whose*.  
Whose book was it?  
Answer: Stephen’s |

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that is used instead of a noun.

*Maria* is my friend.  
*She* will be having a birthday party on Saturday.  

In the first sentence, Maria is a noun. In the second sentence, the word *she* is used instead of Maria. *She* is a pronoun.