

Nouns are any person, place, or thing you can name.

Here are three things to know about nouns:

1. There are two types of nouns: proper nouns and common nouns.

A proper noun:

- a. Names a particular person, place, or thing, and
- b. Is ALWAYS capitalized:

George Washington

Idaho

The Wall Street Journal

Big Mac

A common noun:

- a. Tells you the type or kind of person, place, or thing, and
- b. Is NEVER capitalized unless part of a proper name:

boy

ocean

computer

professor vs. *Professor Stone*

2. Nouns are also separated into three groups: concrete, abstract, and collective.

Concrete nouns:

- a. Are things you can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch: *book, bird, apple, table*
- b. Can be singular or plural: *books, birds, apples, tables*
- c. Typically use the articles *a, an,* and *the* before them: *a book, the bird, an apple, the table*

Abstract nouns:

- a. Tell the ideas, actions, or qualities that you cannot express with your senses:
happy, smart, innocent
- b. Almost always use the article *the* before them: He was *the happy* child. She is *the smart* girl. They are *the innocent* victims.

Collective nouns:

- a. Name groups or collections of people or things: *audience, class, people, team*
- b. Are singular in form and usually have a singular verb: The *audience is* laughing.
An exception: when the individuals are emphasized and not the group, you may use a plural verb. A majority of the *audience are* laughing. (The members of the audience are laughing)

3. Nouns have four properties: case, gender, number, and person.

Case tells you the relationship between the noun and the other words in the sentence:

- a. Nominative case is the noun as a subject: *The train is here*
- b. Objective case is the noun (the object) being acted upon: *Go get on the train*
- c. Possessive case shows possession, ownership, or a relationship: *The train's tracks*

Gender lets us know if the noun is masculine, feminine, or neutral:

- a. *Prince* vs. *Princess* vs. *Monarchy*
- b. *Bull* vs. *Heifer* vs. *Cattle*

Number shows how many nouns are referred to:

- a. *Book* vs. *Books*

Person lets us know if the object is first, second, or third person:

- a. First person is the speaker: *I felt great*
- b. Second person is being spoken to: *Students, please listen*
- c. Third person is being spoken about: *A knife was stuck in his back*

As you can see, nouns are characterized in many different ways. They are necessary since they denote the person, place, thing, or idea of the sentence. Without one, your sentence will be incomplete and confusing.