

Level One: Parts of Speech

There are eight kinds of words. In an almost infinitely complicated universe, we say everything with only eight kinds of words. Even more amazing, there are only two main kinds of words: the noun and the verb. The other six kinds of words, with one exception (the interjection), work flexibly with the noun and the verb, modifying or connecting or showing relationships. In other words, in the face of the vast complexity of the universe, our language strategy is one of almost perfect simplicity. It is brilliant.

Nouns and verbs are the chambers of the heart of the sentence. A noun is a name of something such as a person, place, or thing. Nouns serve many purposes, but often the noun is the subject of the sentence. It is what the sentence is about, such as the noun *philosophy* in the sentence *Greek philosophy still influences our thinking today*. The verb is about the noun and shows action or linking or being.

Pronouns take the place of nouns, as when we say *she* instead of *Amelia*.

Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns: It was *a tedious* lecture. He is *blue*.

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs: They swam *quickly*.

Prepositions show a relationship between their object and another word in the sentence: *The boy with the red balloon laughed*. In that sentence, the preposition *with* shows a relationship between its object *balloon* and the noun *boy*. We will see later that prepositional phrases act like adjectives or adverbs.

Conjunctions join two words or two groups of words: Bob *and* Jane.

Interjections only show emotion; they do not have a grammatical function such as connecting or replacing: *Yes*, I will have chocolate cake.

To get the sense of these eight kinds of words, let us look at a few sentences, keeping in mind that all sentences have the same eight kinds of words.