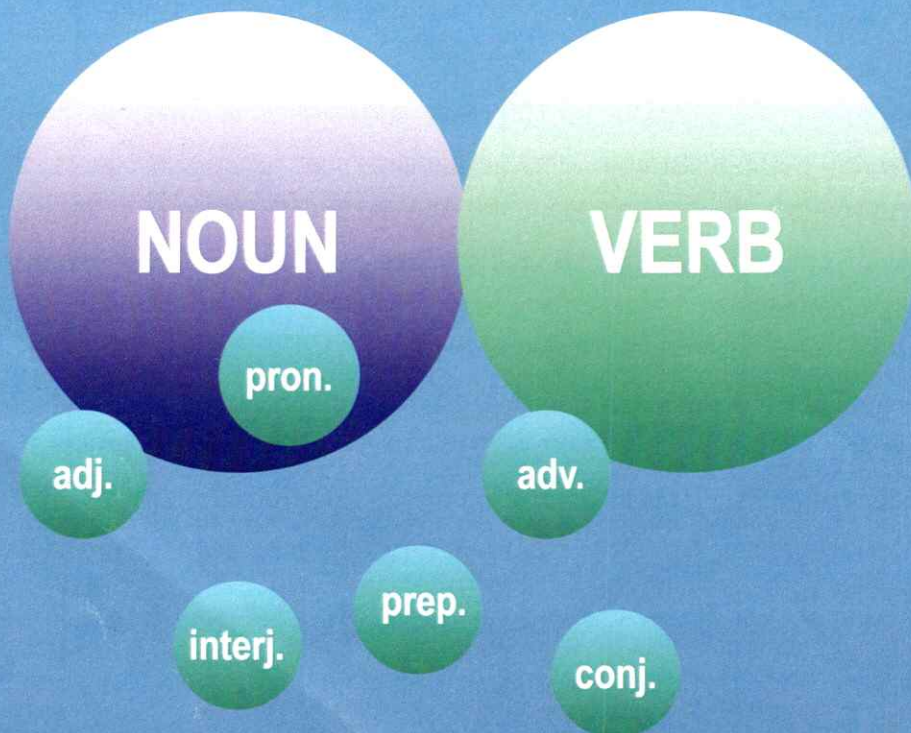


LEVEL ONE





The Eight Parts of Speech

There are billions of objects, events, and processes in the world, so you would expect to need thousands of kinds of words to name them all. The truth is the opposite. Our language solves the problem of the world's complexity with a strategy of word simplicity. We have only two main kinds of words and six minor kinds of words for elaboration and flexibility. It is genius.

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

Noun (n.): The first main kind of word in English is the **noun**. The word *noun* comes from the Latin *nomen*, name, and that is what a noun does; it names. A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing, such as *Caesar*, *Shakespeare*, *Rome*, *Albuquerque*, *river*, *shadow*, *integrity*, or *magniloquence*. A noun can be the name of a process, such as the *beginning*. **Proper** nouns (*Charlotte*, *Melville*) are capitalized, and **common** nouns (*benediction*) are not. **Concrete** nouns (*mantel*) are names of objects, and **abstract** nouns (*charisma*, *alacrity*) are names of ideas. When we call someone by name, the person's name is called the **noun of direct address** (*Barrymore*, I presume). A noun that names a group, such as *herd*, is known as a **collective** noun. Nouns are **singular** (sing.) if they describe individual things or **plural** (pl.) if they describe multiple things: *dragonfly/dragonflies*.

In Walt Whitman's sentence from his poem in *Leaves of Grass*, "O Captain! my captain! rise up and hear the bells," *Captain* is a **noun of direct address**, and the subject of the verb *rise* is understood to be the second person pronoun *you* because the sentence is imperative.

In William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine calls Petruchio "a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen." Few of us would like to be named by the noun *rudesby*.

Noun sound: Words often have sounds that echo what they name; nouns such as *bang*, *crash*, *trickle*, *drip*, *fizz*, and *crunch*—some of which also can be used as verbs—have an audible relationship to their objects.

Nouns from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*: In his 1881 masterpiece *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson used many nouns, especially nautical nouns, such as *forecastle*, *palisade*, *doldrums*, *hummock*, *miscreant*, *doubloon*, *buccaneer*, *capstan*, *quay*, *sword*, *gunwale*, *lancet*, *rogue*, *bowsprit*, *hawser*, *slough*, and *truculence* to give an exotic sense of adventure and romance to his sea tale.