

Parts of Speech, Parts of Sentence, and the Dictionary

Without realizing it, we have been moving toward an important accomplishment in knowledge, and now that we have studied parts of speech and parts of sentence, we have reached that point. We now can use grammar to understand the full meaning of a dictionary entry. This is important because when you write academic papers, the dictionary is your salvation.

Any good dictionary contains not only definitions, but a host of usage instructions that might formerly have seemed cryptic (having hidden meaning). These instructions include not only the obvious abbreviations for the parts of speech, such as *n.*, *adj.*, and *v.*, but also abbreviations for verbs, such as *part.* for participle, *v.t.* or *trans.* for transitive, and *v.i.* or *intrans.* for intransitive. Some dictionaries use abbreviations, but others spell out the words in full. Good dictionaries also provide guidance for regular and irregular verbs. Let us look at a few examples.

noun or n.:

si•ne•cure ['sɪnəˌkyoʊr; 'si-]

noun

a position requiring little or no work but giving the holder status or financial benefit.

DERIVATIVES

si•ne•cur•ism ['sɪnəkyoʊrɪzəm; si-] noun

si•ne•cur•ist ['sɪnəˌkyoʊrɪst; si-] noun

ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin *sine cura* 'without care.'

Sinecure is a **noun** that refers to a cushy job. This means that the word can be the subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, object of preposition—any function that nouns always perform. We could say that *the sinecure lasted a long time*, that *he received a sinecure*, that *the job was a sinecure*. Notice that *sinecure* is a noun and not an adjective, which means that you could **not** say, *I wish I had a sinecure job*.