



## TYPES OF NOUNS IN ENGLISH

Can you imagine language without nouns? Like every other language, English relies on nouns as a primary feature of sentences and it is almost impossible to communicate without them. They form a large portion of the vocabulary of a language and are indispensable.

So, what is a noun? It is a part of grammar used to name a person, place, thing, quality, or action. Nouns may function in a sentence as subject, direct object, indirect object, complement, appositive, or object of a preposition. As such, they are very adaptable, but they are generally at the heart of any grammatical construction.

There are a variety of noun types. They can name a person:

- Beyoncé
- King Lear
- Stephen Hawking
- The Prime Minister of Hungary
- My father
- A boy

They can also name a specific place:

- Mount Kilimanjaro
- The Nile River
- My kitchen
- Main Street
- The classroom

Most commonly, nouns can also name things, even though those things might be intangible items, such as activities, processes, or concepts.

**Examples:**

- Table
- Dress
- Kitten
- Gravity
- Capitalism

In some case, they may be used to name things which do not even exist since they are fictional, imaginary, or unproven.

**Examples:**

- The Lord of the Rings
- Kryptonite
- Unicorns

## Proper Nouns vs. Common Nouns

Nouns are commonly distinguished between whether they are a proper noun or a common noun. A proper noun refers to a specific name of a person, place, or thing. These are easily recognizable because they are always capitalized.



**Examples:**

- Will **Tom** be attending this semester?
- ↳ **Tom** is the name of a specific person.
- Next year I will plan to visit the **Great Pyramid of Giza**.
- ↳ The **Great Pyramid of Giza** is the specific name of a tourist site.

On the other hand, a common noun is more generic in its application because it refers to a group of items. Common nouns are not capitalized in the English

language (unless, for example, they are used in a title or at the start of a sentence).

### Examples:

- The chicken crossed the road.
- ↳ “Chicken” is used here as a common noun; the chicken does not have a name or other specific identity. We only know the action that it takes. In addition, “road” is a common noun in this same sentence. We do not know the name of the specific road, however.
- The boy played with his new blue bicycle.
- ↳ Here, both “boy” and “bicycle” function as common nouns. We don’t know the exact identity of the boy nor do we have specific information about the bicycle, other than the adjective “blue.”

## Types of Nouns

Common (or generic) nouns can be broken down into three categories: concrete nouns, abstract nouns, and collective nouns. We discuss each of these below with some examples.

1 - A **concrete noun** is one that is real and physically existent, that is, it can be perceived by the senses.

### Examples:

- I heard the windchime.
- This ice cream is tasty
- ↳ Windchime and ice cream are concrete, real things that can be sensed.

2 - Conversely, an **abstract noun** cannot be perceived by the senses and is more conceptual in nature.

### Examples:

- The firefighter demonstrated bravery when she rescued the girl.
- ↳ “Bravery” is an abstract noun. While we know it exists, it cannot be perceived by the senses (it cannot be seen, heard, or sensed in any other way).
- As the new year holiday approaches, we have hope that it will usher in better days.
- ↳ “Hope” is an abstract noun in this sentence. It is a real emotion and concept, but it cannot be perceived by the senses.

3 - A **collective noun** refers to a group or collection of people or things (in the singular).

### **Examples:**

- That collection of artifacts is priceless.
- ↳ “Collection of artifacts” as it is used here is a collective noun. These take a singular verb (“is”) since they are a collection representing one unit.
- A pack of wild dogs appeared outside my window.
- ↳ “Pack of wild dogs” is also a collective noun.

## **Nouns as Objects**

Nouns can additionally serve in a sentence as objects of a verb. These can be either a direct object (a noun that receives the action performed by the subject) or an indirect object (a noun that is the recipient of a direct object)

### **Examples:**

- Please serve some tea to her.
- ↳ “Tea” is a direct object (what is being given) and she/her is the indirect object (to whom the tea is being given).
- I downloaded a new version of the app.
- ↳ Here, “app” is a direct object (which was downloaded by me).

## **Nouns as subject and object complements**

Sometimes nouns can serve as subject complement, following linking verbs like to be, become, or seem. In this example, the noun diplomat is used as a subject complement.

- Steve is a diplomat.
- ↳ Functioning as a subject complement, a diplomat is what Steve is.
- A related and similar function of nouns is that of an object complement. In this case, the verbs denotes making, naming, or creating and are often followed by object complements.
- He assumed the presidency.
- ↳ Presidency is the noun used as object complement in this sentence.

## **Plural vs Singular Nouns**

Nouns can be singular or plural, and typically (although not always!) the plural is formed by adding **-s** or **-es** at the end of the noun.