A Quick Guide to Sentence Structure and Parts of Speech in English

**noun** names a person, place, thing, quality or idea

Examples: Chicago, Mary, table, kindness

Juan lives in **Chicago**. **Mary** likes to travel. The **table** is set for dinner. She is full of **kindness**.

Every complete sentence (or independent clause) must include a **subject**. This subject is often a noun. Without the subject, the reader wonders "who, what, or where?"

- Who likes to travel? **Mary** likes to travel.
- What is set for dinner? The **table** is set for dinner.

**verb** describes an action or state

Examples: write, have, sing, (to) be, can

Students **write** essays. My cat **has** a tail. She **sings** well. The city **is** exciting. We **can** talk.

Every complete sentence (or independent clause) must also include a **verb**. The verb describes what action the subject of the sentence performs. This action can also be a state of being.

- What do the students **do**? Students **write** essays.
- What does she do well? She **sings** well.
- What is the city? The city **is** exciting.

Every complete sentence (or independent clause) must also be a complete thought. If it contains a noun and a verb, but it is not a complete thought, then it is a **dependent clause**.

- What happens when Mark runs? When Mark runs, he **sweats**.
- What happens because? We **hydrate** because it is hot.

**Conjunction** joins sentences, clauses or phrases

Examples: and, so, but

It rained, so the game was canceled. The food is great, but it is expensive.

Any sentence that includes two independent clauses (they contain a subject and verb and form a complete thought) must be jointed with a comma and a **conjunction**.

Incorrect: Jun walked to the store, she bought a bottled water.
Correct: Jun walked to the store, **and** she bought a bottled water.

Other parts of speech to remember:

**article** used with a noun to show the noun is definite (one specific thing) or indefinite (any general thing)

Examples: the [definite], a, an [general]

He traveled to a city. Watch for the fireworks. She wrote an essay. The computer broke.
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**adjective**  
gives more information about a noun  
Examples: kind, hot, blue, better.

My brother is a **kind** person. It is **hot** today. You can fill out the **blue** form. That is a **better** hat.

**adverb**  
describes or adds meaning to another verb, adjective or adverb  
Examples: quickly, very, badly, carefully.

He walked home **quickly**. That test was **very** easy. I sing **badly**. We must **carefully** proofread.

**Preposition**  
shows the way words are connected  
Examples: on, for, of, in

The cat is **on** the table. She has a plan **for** her life. Where is my bottle **of** water? It's **in** the box.

**pronoun**  
replaces or stands in place of a noun  
Examples: I, her, him, he, she, it, they

He lives in Los Angeles. I love Italian food. She is visiting today. They gave the job to him.

**other determiners**  
indicates possession, demonstrates or quantifies other words  
Examples: my, your, this, that, some, few

The cat is **on** the table. She has a plan **for** her life. Where is my bottle **of** water? It's **in** the box.

Quick usage and mechanics tips:

- Capitalize the first letter of a sentence. -This is a complete sentence.
- Include punctuation at the end of a sentence. -End a statement with a period. -End a question with a question mark?
- Capitalize all proper nouns and names including titles, addresses, months and days of the week. -Elvis Presley -United States of America -Freemont Street -President Lincoln -Monday, Tuesday -May, December -Mr. Shu -Las Vegas, Nevada
- Use a **singular** verb with a **singular** subject. -The **dog** walks. -The **dog** hairy.
- Use **plural** verbs with **plural** subjects. -The **dogs** walk. -The **dogs are** hairy.
- With compound subject, use a **plural** verb. -Bill and Juanita go to class every Wednesday. -The book and the pen are on the desk.
- With collective a noun, use a **singular** verb. -The family **drives** a minivan. -The staff **prepares** all meals.