

# What is a noun?

A **noun** is a word used to name a person, animal, place, thing, and abstract idea. Nouns are usually the first words which small children learn. The **highlighted** words in the following [sentences](#) are all nouns:

Late last **year** our **neighbors** bought a **goat**.

**Portia White** was an **opera singer**.

The **bus inspector** looked at all the **passengers' passes**.

According to **Plutarch**, the **library** at **Alexandria** was destroyed in 48 B.C.

**Philosophy** is of little **comfort** to the **starving**.

A noun can function in a sentence as a [subject](#), a [direct object](#), an [indirect object](#), a [subject complement](#), an [object complement](#), an [appositive](#), an [adjective](#) or an [adverb](#).

## Noun Gender

Many common nouns, like "engineer" or "teacher," can refer to men or women. Once, many English nouns would change form depending on their [gender](#) -- for example, a man was called an "author" while a woman was called an "authoress" -- but this use of **gender-specific nouns** is very rare today. Those that are still used occasionally tend to refer to occupational categories, as in the following sentences.

David Garrick was a very prominent eighteenth-century actor.

Sarah Siddons was at the height of her career as an actress in the 1780s.

The manager was trying to write a want ad, but he couldn't decide whether he was advertising for a "waiter" or a "waitress"

# What is a sentence?

Every complete **sentence** contains two parts: a **subject** and a **predicate**. The subject is what (or whom) the sentence is about, while the predicate tells something about the subject. In the following sentences, the predicate is enclosed in braces ({}), while the subject is **highlighted**.

**Judy** {runs}.

**Judy and her dog** {run on the beach every morning}.

To determine the subject of a sentence, first isolate the [verb](#) and then make a question by placing "who?" or "what?" before it -- the answer is the subject.

The audience littered the theatre floor with torn wrappings and spilled popcorn.

The verb in the above sentence is "littered." Who or what littered? The audience did. "The audience" is the subject of the sentence. The predicate (which always includes the verb) goes on to relate something about the subject: what about the audience? It "littered the theatre floor with torn wrappings and spilled popcorn."

**Homework:** Write ten complete sentences using a subject and a predicate. Answer the question of "What or Whom" by underlining the subject in the sentence.

*This lesson does not need to be submitted: Points/reward value: 0*