

Noun

Proper and Common Nouns

Introduction to Nouns

A **Noun** is a name. This name can be that of a living being, a place, a thing or an idea.

For example:

Vinod is a friendly **boy**.

(‘Vinod’ and ‘boy’ are both names of living beings.)

I am standing on the **road** near **India Gate**.

(‘Road’ and ‘India Gate’ are both names of places.)

The only **soft drink** that he drinks is **Pepsi**.

(‘Soft drink’ and ‘Pepsi’ are both names of things.)

Authors should have absolute **freedom** to express a point of view.

(Freedom is a name of an idea.)

Proper and Common Nouns

Now, the next thing to know is that a noun can be the particular name of a living being, place, thing or idea. In the above examples, ‘Vinod’, ‘India Gate’ and ‘Pepsi’ are all particular names. Such particular names are known as **Proper Nouns**.

So, then what are ‘boy’, ‘road’, ‘soft drink’ ‘authors’ and ‘freedom’? These nouns are the general names of a living being, place, thing and idea. Such general names are known as **Common Nouns**.

Hence, proper nouns are the unique names of living beings, places, things and ideas; while common nouns are the names of living beings, places, things and ideas of the same kind or class.

For example:

Naina is a good **girl**.

(‘Naina’ is a proper noun and ‘girl’ is a common noun.)

This **rhinoceros** is called **Pintoo**.

(‘Pintoo’ is a proper noun and ‘rhinoceros’ is a common noun.)

January is the first **month** of the **year**.

(‘January’ is a proper noun; ‘month’ and ‘year’ are common nouns.)

Last **week**, she was absent on **Monday**.

(‘Monday’ is a proper noun and ‘week’ is a common noun.)

Chennai is a **city** in **Tamil Nadu**.

(‘Chennai’ and ‘Tamil Nadu’ are proper nouns; ‘city’ is a common noun.)

English is a funny **language**.

(‘English’ is a proper noun and ‘language’ is a common noun.)

Shakespeare was a great **writer**.

(‘Shakespeare’ is a proper noun and ‘writer’ is a common noun.)

Which **newspaper** do you read?

I read **The Indian Express**.

(‘The Indian Express’ is a proper noun and ‘newspaper’ is a common noun.)

Which **book** were you reading?

I was reading **The Great Expectations**.

(‘The Great Expectations’ is a proper noun and ‘book’ is a common noun.)

Can I have some **water**?

You can have **Limca**.

(‘Limca’ is a proper noun and ‘water’ is a common noun.)

Collective, Abstract and Compound Nouns

When nouns point to a group or collection of living beings or things, they are called **Collective Nouns**.

For example:

The **police** are searching for the clues.

The **army** has won the battle.

Joseph was taking care of his uncle’s **herd** of sheep.

The **crowd** greeted the **team** with loud cheers.

(‘Police’, ‘army’, ‘herd’, ‘crowd’ and ‘team’ are all collective nouns.)

When a noun points to something about which you can only think or feel, it is called an **Abstract Noun**.

For example:

Honesty is a good **policy**.

Truth always triumphs.

Justice will be done.

(‘Honesty’, ‘policy’, ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ are all abstract nouns.)

A **Compound Noun** is a name which consists of two or more words that are used together.

A compound noun can be a single word.

For example:

The **headmaster** was writing something on the **blackboard**.

It can be a hyphenated word.

For example:

My **mother-in-law** and my **father-in-law** treat me just like their **son-in-law**.

It can be two words.

For example:

The **police officer** was waiting at the **post office**.

Singular and Plural Nouns

Singular means one, and **Plural** means more than one. A noun that has a singular and a plural form is known as a **Countable Noun**; while a noun that has only a singular form is known as an **Uncountable Noun**.

Words like 'blood', 'freedom', 'intelligence', 'rice', 'sugar', 'money', 'ice', 'water', 'oxygen', 'carbon dioxide', 'air', 'grass', 'luggage', 'information' do not have a plural form. Hence, they are all examples of uncountable nouns.

Now, the plural forms of countable nouns are formed in different ways. Some ways and their examples are listed below.

By adding s

Snake – Snakes

Cat – Cats

Goat – Goats

Dog – Dogs

Team – Teams

Daughter-in-law – Daughters-in-law

Passer-by – Passers-by

Spoonful – Spoonfuls

By adding es

Box – Boxes

Gas – Gases

Bus – Buses

Hero – Heroes

Potato – Potatoes

By adding ves

Knife – Knives

Leaf – Leaves

Loaf – Loaves

Shelf – Shelves

Self – Selves

By adding ies

Family – Families

Baby – Babies

Country – Countries

Irregular

Sheep – Sheep

Deer – Deer

Child – Children

Man – Men

Woman – Women

Foot – Feet

Mouse – Mice

Tooth – Teeth

Possessive Nouns

Nouns can show possession or ownership. The possessive is formed by using the apostrophe (') mark. Let us look at some examples of nouns showing possession.

Hari's book is torn.

(Here, 'Hari's book' refers to a book belonging to a person named Hari. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

The **postman's** speech was encouraging.

(Here, 'postman's speech' refers to a speech delivered by a particular postman. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

The **boy's** dad is a pilot.

(Here, 'the boy's dad' refers to the father of a particular boy. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

The **boys'** project was a big success.

(Here, 'the boys' project' refers to a project made by more than one boy. Note that there is no 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

The **girl's** name is Geeta.

(Here, 'the girl's name' refers to the name of a particular girl. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

I study in a **girls'** school.

(Here, 'a girls' school' refers to a school where girls study. Note that there is no 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

Please call the **child's** mother.

(Here, 'the child's mother' refers to the mother of a particular child. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

I got a gift from my teacher on **children's** day.

(Here, 'children's day' refers to a day for children. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

Sudhir and Rajbir's shop is located in a mall.

(Here, 'Sudhir and Rajbir's shop' indicates that the shop is jointly owned by the persons named Sudhir and Rajbir. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

Rachna's and Naresh's presentations were liked by all.

(Here, 'Rachna's and Naresh's presentations' indicates that the persons named Rachna and Naresh made separate presentations that were liked by all. Note that there is an 's' after the apostrophe mark.)

The Indefinite Article and Nouns

Introduction to Articles

An article shows whether the noun that comes after it is specific or non-specific.

There are two types of articles—the **indefinite article** 'a' or 'an', and the **definite article** 'the'.

The first type points out non-specific nouns and the second type points out specific nouns.

For example:

A boy

(Here, the presence of 'a' shows that some non-specific 'boy' is being talked about.)

An elephant

(Here, the presence of 'an' shows that some non-specific 'elephant' is being talked about.)

The red car

(Here, the presence of 'the' shows that some specific 'red car' is being talked about.)

The Indefinite Article

'A' or 'an' is termed as the indefinite article because it does not specify the noun it talks about. In other words, **it leaves the noun indefinite.**

For example:

A girl is singing.

(Here, the noun 'girl' is left indefinite because of the use of the indefinite article. It is not specified as to which girl is singing.)

An umbrella is missing.

(Here, the noun 'umbrella' is left indefinite because of the use of the indefinite article. It is not specified as to which umbrella is missing.)

A student should be regular about his studies.

(Here, 'student' means all students in general. In this case, 'a student' represents the entire category of students.)

I am looking for **an honest person** to do this job.

(Here, 'honest person' means all honest persons in general. In this case, 'an honest person' represents any one honest person from the entire category of honest persons.)

A Ms. Bindu is on the phone.

(Here, 'a' is used before 'Ms. Bindu' so as to show that the person is not known to the speaker.)

The indefinite article is used for indicating a singular countable noun. In the previous examples, the indefinite article before each noun shows that exactly one girl is singing and that exactly one umbrella is missing.

The indefinite article 'an' is used when the word that follows it begins with a vowel sound.

For example:

He threw **an egg** at the player.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'egg'— begins with a vowel sound.)

The mail arrived **an hour** ago.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'hour'—begins with a vowel sound.)

He is **an intelligent man**.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'intelligent'—begins with a vowel sound.)

The indefinite article 'a' is used when the word that follows it begins with a consonant sound.

For example:

There is **a mouse** in the room.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'mouse'—begins with a consonant sound.)

His father has **a university degree**.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'university'—begins with a consonant sound.)

I saw **a beautiful umbrella**.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'beautiful'—begins with a consonant sound.)

The Definite Article and Nouns

'The' is termed as the definite article because it specifies the noun it talks about. In other words, **it makes the noun definite**.

For example:

The postman is waiting at the door.

(Here, the noun 'postman' refers to a particular or specific postman.)

The children are making a lot of noise.

(Here, the noun 'children' refers to a particular group of children.)

I have two pets—a dog and a cat. **The cat** is lazier than **the dog**.

(Here, the indefinite article 'a' is used before the nouns 'dog' and 'cat', when they are introduced for the first time. However, the definite article 'the' is used when these nouns are mentioned again.)

The definite article is used for indicating a singular countable noun.

For example:

The car has been stolen.

(Here, 'the' is used before the singular form of the noun 'car'.)

The definite article is used for indicating a plural countable noun.

For example:

The apples were very sweet.

(Here, 'the' is used before the plural form of the noun 'apple'.)

The definite article is used for indicating an uncountable noun.

For example:

The police asked the thief where **the gold** was hidden.

(Here, 'the' is used before the uncountable noun 'gold'.)

The definite article is used before nouns that are considered unique, and also before names of certain places, organisations, certain books, newspapers, famous buildings and certain abbreviations.

For example:

The sun, The earth, The moon, The sky, The equator,

The North Pole, The South Pole, The Indian Ocean, The Arabian Sea, The Brahmaputra River, The Thar Desert, The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, The Himalayas,

The United States of America, The Indian Republic, The United Nations, The Congress,

The Mahabharata, **The** Ramayana, **The** Indian Express, **The** Times of India,

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, **The** Parliament House of India, **The** Red Fort, **The** Taj Mahal,

The UK, **The** US, **The** BJP, **The** CPI (M)

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