

# Chapter 2

## Nouns

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## 2.i. Chapter Overview

### 2.i.i. Preview

The goal of this chapter is to introduce nouns as a word class, specify their linguistic properties, and identify various kinds of nouns according to their unique properties. Spelling rules for pluralized count nouns are covered at the end of the chapter.

## 2.i.ii. Vocabulary

**Directions:** Write the definitions of the following in your own words, and, if possible, give an example of each type of word.

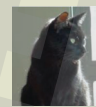
Word	Definition
• <i>noun</i>	
◦ <i>animate noun</i>	
◦ <i>common noun</i>	
◦ <i>proper noun</i>	
◦ <i>concrete noun</i>	
◦ <i>abstract noun</i>	
◦ <i>count noun</i>	
◦ <i>noncount noun</i>	
◦ <i>mass noun</i>	
◦ <i>irregular noun</i>	
◦ <i>collective noun</i>	

## 2.1. Nouns

A **noun** is traditionally defined as the name of a **person**, **place**, **thing**, or **idea**. A **noun** can also be identified easily according to its **inflectional** and **syntactic properties**.

### 2.1.1. Noun Tests

- The **inflectional properties** of a **noun** are the following:
  - a **noun** can be **pluralized** by adding a **plural morpheme** {-s}, or
  - it can be **pluralized** by adding a **possessive morpheme** {'s}
    - professor (**singular**) → professors (**plural**)
    - professor's (**possessive**) → professors' (**plural possessive**)
      - The *professor* is in her office.
      - *Professors* are absentminded people.
      - The *professor's* cats are very cute.
- Syntactically**, the presence of an **article** (*a*, *an*, *the*) signals that a noun will follow:
  - There is *a* cat in *the* garden.
  - An* apple *a* day keeps *the* doctor away.
- Another **syntactic** position that is possible for **nouns** is after **prepositions** (*in*, *on*, *at*, *for*, *etc*), and on both sides of the **possessive preposition of**:
  - I live *in* Chicago, and I like to go *for* a walk *by* the lake every day.
  - Parts *of* the house need painting.
  - The skyscrapers *of* Chicago are very famous.



#### Zifir says 2.1.1.:

- Note that **other words** that modify a **noun**, such as an adjective, may come between the article and the **noun**:
  - Eat an organic apple every day.
- Nouns** may appear **without** an article:
  - Knowledge is power.
  - Cats and goats are among my favorite animals.
  - Coffee smells good.

The **possessive** *of* may be **replaced** by a **possessive** *{s}* (preferably with **animate nouns**, i.e., **nouns** that refer to **living** things):

- The cars *of the businessman* occupied too much space. → The businessman's *cars* occupied too much space.

### Exercises 2.1.1. Noun Identification

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**Directions:** Underline each noun in the following sentences. Test your answer by applying linguistic tests (inflectional and syntactic). Note that some sentences have multiple nouns.

**Example:** The dog is running.

**Inflectional:** we can pluralize it: *dogs* or we can have it in the possessive: the *dog's* collar

**Syntactic:** the word *dog* follows an article *the*

1. The marketplace of Istanbul is 550 years old.

**Inflectional:**

**Syntactic:**

2. The tail of the cat seemed too long.

**Inflectional:**

**Syntactic:**

3. The solutions to the problem were given at the end of the book.

**Inflectional:**

**Syntactic:**

4. I live in Chicago, but I go abroad for research in the summer.

**Inflectional:**

**Syntactic:**

5. Efficient fieldwork is the basis for good research.

**Inflectional:**

**Syntactic:**

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### 2.1.2. Kinds of Nouns

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**Nouns** are classified according to their **unique properties**. They may be **common** or **proper**; **concrete** or **abstract**; **count** or **noncount**, or **collective**. **Count nouns** are **pluralized** according to specific rules, or they may have special forms.

#### 2.1.2.1. Common vs. Proper Nouns

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**Common nouns** refer to **ordinary** entities: *carpet, soda, wolves*. **Proper nouns** refer to **individual** or **unique** entities: *Northern Illinois University, Kurt Vonnegut, Noam Chomsky*

The **initial** letter of a **proper noun** is always **capitalized**. The initial letter of a **common noun** is **capitalized** only when it appears at the **beginning** of a sentence.

- *Oya*, the *dog*, happily chewed on her toy *antler*.

A **common noun** may appear with an **article**, *a* or *the*. It is **grammatical** to say *a cat* or *the book* because *cat* and *book* are **common nouns**. It is not **grammatical** to say *a John* or *the London*. However, there are some contexts in which this use may be correct. For instance, one may say “a Mr. Jones” to disparage Mr. Jones”:

- *A Mr. Jones* wanted to see you without an appointment.

Furthermore, with some **geographical proper nouns**, it is possible to use articles:

- *The Brooklyn Bridge, the Appalachians, the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Alps*

**Table 2.1.2.1. Common vs. Proper Nouns**

Common Nouns	Proper Nouns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ordinary entities</li><li>• initial letter not usually <b>capitalized</b></li><li>• can appear with an <b>article</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• individual unique entities</li><li>• initial letter always <b>capitalized</b></li><li>• doesn't generally appear with an <b>article</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ rug</li><li>◦ cheese</li><li>◦ mice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Troy</li><li>◦ Reed College</li><li>◦ Jan</li></ul>

### Exercises 2.1.2.1. Common/Proper Noun Identification

**Directions:** Circle the proper nouns and underline the common nouns in the sentences below.

**Example:** Some people prefer to drink carbonated drinks, but Serdar drinks only water.

1. The summer before she got her degree, Mary started swimming.
2. They claim that a successful man is one who makes more money than his family can spend.
3. Buddha recommends that everyone concentrate the mind on the present moment.
4. Mark Twain suggested that one should go to heaven for climate, hell for company.
5. According to Milton Berle, a committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours.

### 2.1.2.2. Concrete vs. Abstract Nouns

**Nouns** that refer to **tangible** entities that can be observed by the use of the **senses** are called **concrete nouns**.

- *books, dogs, food, bicycle*

Those that refer to entities that **cannot** be observed by the senses, and which are **not** tangible are called **abstract nouns**:

- *hatred, desire, knowledge, power*

**Table 2.1.2.2. Concrete vs. Abstract Nouns**

Concrete Nouns	Abstract Nouns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entities that can be observed with the senses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entities which are not tangible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>candles</li> <li>box</li> <li>platypus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>linguistics</li> <li>love</li> <li>irony</li> </ul>

### Exercises 2.1.2.2. Concrete/Abstract Noun Identification

**Directions:** Circle the concrete nouns and underline the abstract nouns in the sentences below.

**Example:** Fans of Pink Floyd love its music and ideas.

- Pessimism is more common among older generations.
- Woody Allen says that he is not afraid of death, but he just doesn't want to be there when it happens.
- Nobody supported him in his quest for perfection.
- The pursuit of happiness is a human right.
- I have had three cupcakes for breakfast, and I feel guilty but happy.

### 2.1.2.3. Count vs. Noncount Nouns

We have already noted that **nouns** can be **pluralized**, and we used **pluralizing** as one of the tests to identify **nouns**. **Nouns** that can be **pluralized** are called **count nouns**. **Count nouns** refer to things that can be divided into smaller units and **counted**.

- cat, hand, coat, iguana, course, president*

**Singular countnouns** can be **preceded** by:

- this, that*
- every, each, either, neither*
- a(n), the*

**Plural countnouns** can be **preceded** by:

- these, those*
- some, any, enough*
- No article ( $\emptyset$  = **zero article**)

*The* Some **nouns cannot** be **pluralized** because they are **noncount**, i.e. **uncountable**. **Noncount nouns** refer to things that are regarded as wholes that **cannot** be divided into parts. They usually refer to **abstract** and **mass** or **collective nouns**. **Mass nouns** are **nouns** that cannot be quantified; therefore, they **cannot** be **pluralized**.

- Liquids, gases
  - water, oxygen, oil*
- Names of languages
  - English, Turkish, Albanian*



**Zifir says 2.1.2.3.:**

- Proper nouns may or may not** be pluralized depending on what the **proper noun** refers to:
  - Some **geographical proper nouns may** be pluralized because they refer to multiple entities:
    - The Appalachians
  - Some **proper nouns** refer to a **single** individual or entity and **may not** be pluralized:
    - The Grant Park

- **Abstract nouns**
  - *courage, love, pride, pleasure, weather*

**Noncount nouns** are considered **singular** because they **cannot** be **pluralized**. They **can** be preceded by:

- *some, any, enough, this, that, much* as in *much* harm; a *little* harm; *little* harm and the definite **article** *the*:
- *the* experience, *the* courage (of someone)

They **cannot** be preceded by:

- *these, those, ever, each, either, or neither*

Following are some examples of **mass nouns**:

- *wood, milk, dancing, significance, love, flour, hair, cooking, air, steel*

**Table 2.1.2.3. Count vs. Noncount Nouns**

Count Nouns	Noncount Nouns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can be divided into smaller parts</li> <li>• can be preceded by words like <i>this, that, every, each, either, neither</i>, or no <b>article</b> at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cannot be divided into smaller parts</li> <li>• can be preceded by words like <i>some, any, enough, this, that, much, a/an, the</i></li> <li>• cannot be preceded by <i>these, those, ever, each, either</i>, or <i>neither</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ rug</li> <li>◦ cheese</li> <li>◦ mice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ work</li> <li>◦ abstraction</li> <li>◦ Chinese</li> </ul>

### Exercises 2.1.2.3. Count/Noncount Noun Identification

**Directions:** Circle the noncount nouns and underline the count nouns.

**Example:** The student drank water and ate dates.

1. Oscar Wilde once said that we should always forgive our enemies because nothing annoys them so much.
2. When you do not want to work, start thinking about the benefits of relaxation.
3. My hair looks better when I do not comb it.
4. In scientific research, reliability of sources is very important.
5. The best pets are those you can take care of without help.

#### 2.1.2.3.1. Pluralization Rules

Only **countnouns** can be **pluralized**. The **pluralization** of **nouns** is more **complicated** than simply adding the **plural form** {-s}. There are several ways to **pluralize nouns** in English.

1. The most common form of **pluralization** consists of **adding** {-s} to the **noun**:
  - cat → cats
  - dog → dogs
  - goat → goats



**Zifir says 2.1.2.3.1.a.:**

- If there is another vowel before o, we simply add {-s}:
  - Stereo → stereos

2. A variation of the most common form: **Add {-es}**:

- The reason we add {-es} **instead of** {-s} to some nouns is that the **last** letter/sound of these words are too similar to {-s}, and we make it easier to distinguish the **plural form** from the **singular** by **adding** {-es}. For instance, if we simply **add** an {-s} to **pluralize** the **noun** *bus* and come up with *buss*, nobody who hears this word would understand that it is **plural**.

- box → boxes
- glass → glasses
- church → churches

- We add {-es} to **nouns** that **end** in an **o**:

- Tomato → tomatoes

3. If the word ends in *f* or *fe*, change the *f* to */v/* and **add** {-es}:

- knife → knives
- elf → elves

4. If the word **ends** in *y* and there is **another consonant preceding** it, then we **change** the *y* to *i* and add {-es}

- baby → babies

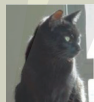
5. **Irregular nouns**: some **nouns** either have a **different** form in the **plural** or do not change in their **plural** form:

- man → men
- child → children
- goose → geese
- sheep → sheep
- Words **borrowed from Latin or Greek** keep their original **plural forms**:
  - alumnus → alumni
  - medium → media
  - focus → foci
  - index → indices
- Some nouns **look plural** but they are **singular**:
  - news
  - measles
  - linguistics
- Some nouns are **always used in the plural**:
  - pants
  - eye-glasses
  - clothes
  - thanks
  - species
  - series
- In compound nouns, **the first noun is pluralized**:
  - mother-in-law → mothers-in-law
  - brother-in-arms → brothers-in-arms



**Zifir says 2.1.2.3.1.b.:**

- There are some exceptions to the *f* or *fe* rule that simply require the **addition** of {-s}:
  - roof → roofs.



**Zifir says 2.1.2.3.1.c.:**

- There are some exceptions to the *y* rule:
  - If the final *y* is preceded by a **vowel**, then the rule does not apply and we simply add {-s}:
- **Nouns** may appear **without** an article:
  - monkey → monkeys
  - If the word that ends in *y* is a **proper noun**, the rule does not apply and we simply add {-s}:
    - The Mentley family → The Mentleys

### Exercises 2.1.2.3.1. Pluralization Rules

**Directions:** Write the plural form of the noun in parentheses ( ).

**Example:** Some women were burned in Salem because people thought they were (*witch*) \_ *witches* \_\_\_\_\_.



1. He eats (potato) \_\_\_\_\_ every day and claims to have eaten vegetables.
  2. Those who sacrifice their dreams for their children are true (hero) \_\_\_\_\_
  3. (Donkey) \_\_\_\_\_ are well-known for their beautiful eyes and velvet-like ears.
  4. There are more (woman) \_\_\_\_\_ in the sciences now than a decade ago.
  5. Some people consider (mouse) \_\_\_\_\_ clean because they clean themselves at least five times a day.
  6. The author forgot to include the (appendix) \_\_\_\_\_ at the end of the book.
  7. You should make clear what (criterion) \_\_\_\_\_ you use in the classification of parts of speech.
  8. I would like to know where my (eye-glasses) \_\_\_\_\_ are. Do not tell me I am wearing them.
  9. What (system) \_\_\_\_\_ has the researcher used to identify the writing system as cuneiform?
  10. They are used to living with (ox) \_\_\_\_\_ in their yards.
- 

#### 2.1.2.4. Collective Nouns

**Collective nouns** refer to a **number** of entities (things or people) spoken of as **one whole**.

- *team, committee, or family*

We consider **collective nouns singular** unless we specifically refer to the members of that collective noun:

- Your *team* is lazy! vs. The members of your *team* are lazy!

**Groups** of animals are given special names when used as **collectives**:

- *herd* of antelopes
- *flight* of bees
- *army* of ants
- *culture* of bacteria
- *pack* of hounds
- *sloth* of bears
- *clan* of hyenas
- *flock* of birds
- *colony* of badgers
- *murder* of crows

#### Exercises 2.1.2.a. Noun Type Identification

**Directions:** In the following sentences, underline the nouns and identify their types. If the type is common, write **C** above the noun; if the type is proper, write **P** above the noun; if the type is concrete, write **Cn** above the noun; if the type is abstract, write **A** above the noun; if the type is count, write **+** above the noun; if the type is noncount, write **-** above the noun. Write **none** if there are no nouns. **Note:** Nouns can fall into multiple categories.

C, Cn, +

P, Cn,

- C, A, +

**Example:** When the crowd went to see Fiddler on the Roof, they sang along with the songs.

1. Very few students prefer to study linguistics these days because it is not easy to find jobs in this field.
2. You have to follow your heart in making a career decision.



3. I could have been a veterinarian, but I studied statistics instead.
  4. My older cat, Kibo, loves his garlic pills, which I give him to control his blood pressure.
  5. There is a pet waiting for you in some shelter.
  6. Everyone has to understand the significance of preventing global warming.
  7. Sustainable farming is a viable goal.
  8. Administrators spend too much time on committee work.
  9. Everyone has his/her own way of cooking rice.
  10. Stray dogs prefer to hunt at night and sleep during the day.
- 

### Exercises 2.1.2.b. Noun Type Identification

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**Directions:** Identify the underlined nouns according to their type.

**Example:** Yoda is my favorite hero of *The Star Wars*.

**Kind of noun:** proper, concrete, noncount noun

- My students work very hard.

**Kind of noun:**

- Enthusiasm is what the employers are looking for in the candidate.

**Kind of noun:**

- The documentary is about a pack of mules in the wild.

**Kind of noun:**

- You hair looks different today.

**Kind of noun:**

- All of my beliefs come from years of thought.

**Kind of noun:**

- I have an eighty-nine year old neighbor who exercises every day.

**Kind of noun:**

- Classical music enthusiasts fill Grant Park in the summer.

**Kind of noun:**

- I was surprised to see Audrey at one of the Grant Park concerts this summer.

**Kind of noun:**

- The Alps are famous for their ski resorts.

**Kind of noun:**

- Wealth may not be important to those who have everything.

**Kind of noun:**

---

### 2.1.3. Syntactic Properties of Nouns

**Nouns** are found in **specific** locations in a sentence. The **syntactic function** of a **noun** is determined by its location(s). We will look into these locations and functions more closely in Chapter 7 on **noun phrases**. For the time being, let us quickly go over some of the **locations** and **functions** of **nouns** in a sentence.

A noun can appear:

- at the **beginning** of a sentence, functioning as the **subject** of the sentence.
  - *Rats* clean themselves at least five times a day.
- **after** the **verb**, functioning as the **direct object** of the **verb**.
  - Some people love *mice*, although most do not.
- **after** the **verb**, functioning as the **indirect object** of the **verb**.
  - The company gave its *representatives* *samples* of their products.
- **after** a **preposition**, functioning as the **object of the preposition**.
  - Everyone expects to receive a gift for *Christmas*.
- **after** a **linking verb**, functioning as a **subject complement** or **predicate nominal**.
  - After she ate and rested, she became an *angel*.
- **after** a **direct object**, functioning as an **object complement**.
  - We call it *kismet*.

### Chapter 2 Cumulative Application

**Directions:** Underline the nouns in the following paragraph and specify the noun type involved. If the type is common, write **C** above the noun; if the type is proper, write **P** above the noun; if the type is concrete, write **Cn** above the noun; if the type is abstract, write **A** above the noun; if the type is count, write **+** above the noun; if the type is noncount, write **-** above the noun; and if the type is collective, write **Co** above the noun. **Note:** Nouns can fall into multiple categories.

C, A, +

C, Cn, +

C, A, +

**Example:** Nouns are found in specific locations in a sentence.

The syntactic function of a noun is determined by its location(s). We will look into these locations and functions more closely in Chapter 7 on phrases. Most people have difficulty in learning the syntactic criteria used in identifying nouns; therefore, it is important to review the relevant section of the chapter before taking a quiz

on nouns. Another challenge in studying nouns is remembering that collective nouns are actually singular. For instance, in the sentence “A colony of badgers is here,” the subject is actually singular because the basic subject, *colony*, is a collective noun and it is singular.

## Appendix – Noun Types

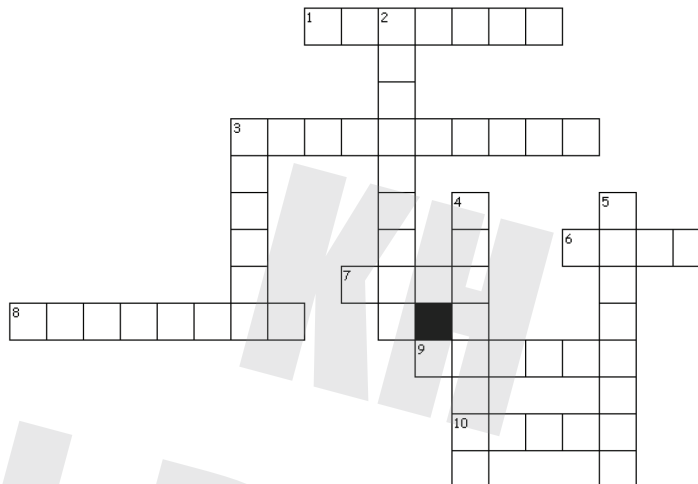
Nouns		
<b>common</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ordinary entities</li> <li>initial letter is not usually <b>capitalized</b></li> <li>can appear with an <b>article</b></li> </ul>	<i>Job</i>
<b>proper</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual unique entities</li> <li>initial letter is always <b>capitalized</b></li> <li>doesn't generally appear with an <b>article</b></li> </ul>	<i>John</i>
<b>concrete</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entities that can be observed with the senses</li> </ul>	<i>cupcake</i>
<b>abstract</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entities which are not tangible</li> </ul>	<i>perfection</i>
<b>count</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be divided into smaller parts</li> <li>can be preceded by words like <i>this, that, every, each, either, neither</i>, or no <b>article</b> at all</li> </ul>	<i>dates</i>
<b>noncount</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot be divided into smaller parts</li> <li>can be preceded by words like <i>some, any, enough, this, that, much, a/an, the</i></li> <li>cannot be preceded by <i>these, those, ever, each, either, or neither</i></li> </ul>	<i>water</i>
<b>collective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a group of individual entities</li> </ul>	<i>flight of bees</i>

## Summary Points for Chapter 2: Nouns

- Nouns are names of a person, thing, place or idea.
- Nouns can be identified according to the inflection they allow, such as pluralization or possession.
- Nouns can also be identified according to their places in the sentence or in the phrase: following an article or an adjective; at the beginning of a sentence; after the verb; after a preposition.
- Nouns can also be identified according to their functions in the sentence: as the subject of the sentence; as the direct object of the verb; as the object of a preposition.
- Nouns may be common or proper; count or noncount; abstract or concrete; or collective.
- The spelling of the plural form of a noun may change according to the final sound or letter of the noun.
- Count nouns may have special forms in the plural or they may not change their form at all.
- Nouns may occur in various locations in a sentence and function as subjects, direct/indirect objects of verbs, objects of prepositions, subject complements, and object complements.

## Chapter 2 Review

**Directions:** Using the vocabulary from the chapter, fill in the crossword.



### Across

1. Nouns that refer to living things
3. Nouns that are a number of entities (things or people) spoken of as one whole
6. The name of a person, place or thing
7. Nouns that cannot be quantified
8. Nouns that are regarded as wholes that cannot be divided into parts
9. Nouns that are individual or unique entities
10. Nouns that can be pluralized and refer to things that can be divided into smaller units and counted

### Down

2. Nouns that either have a different plural form or do not change in their plural form
3. Nouns that are ordinary entities
4. Nouns that refer to entities that cannot be observed by the senses, and which are not tangible
5. Nouns that refer to tangible entities that can be observed by the use of the senses

## Answer Key for Chapter 2 Review

Across	Down
1. animate	2. irregular
3. collective	3. common
6. noun	4. abstract
7. mass	5. concrete
8. noncount	
9. proper	
10. count	

## More To Do with Grammar: Chapter 2

### Linguists:

- **Gerunds** are names of events, and they **function** as **nouns**. They are categorized as **mass nouns** because they are **always singular** and refer only to a single event.
  - *Walking* is a good exercise.
  - *Cooking* is therapeutic.
- For some grammarians, **collective nouns** may be treated as **plural**. This is one of the differences between British and American English. **Collective nouns** are **personal** when they are treated as **plural**:
  - It is this *committee* who make decisions on those matters.
  - They are **non-personal** when they are treated as **singular**:
    - It is this *committee* which makes decisions on these matters.

### Educators:

- Good exercises in the classroom would be the following:
  - Charades is a word guessing game that students love.
    - Write all types of **nouns** including **gerunds** that **function** as **nouns** on cards.
    - Divide students into two groups and have them pick cards and act the meanings out or draw their references on the board for the members of their group to identify.
      - They should identify both the **noun** and its type to get points.
    - The group with the highest score wins.

