

# The Noun

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A *noun* is a word or word group that is used to name a person, a place, a thing, or an idea.

**PERSONS** Aunt Linda, teacher, co-pilot, athlete, Walter D. Myers

**PLACES** stadium, Salt Lake City, football camp, Ireland, house

**THINGS** saltshaker, horse, driveway, Big Dipper, jack-in-the-box

**IDEAS** strength, happiness, Buddhism, amazement, self-confidence

**TIP** Try this test to decide whether a word is a noun. Place the word in the blank in one of the following sentences. If the word makes sense in the sentence, then the word is probably a noun.

**EXAMPLES** I need a \_\_\_\_\_ or I  
new \_\_\_\_\_ admire \_\_\_\_\_.  
I need a new camera. I admire creativity.

## Common and Proper Nouns

You may have noticed that some nouns begin with a lowercase letter while others are capitalized. A *common noun* names any one of a group of persons, places, things, or ideas and is generally not capitalized. A *proper noun* names a specific person, place, thing, or idea and is capitalized.

**COMMON NOUNS** friend, teenager, continent, dog, weekday, building

**PROPER NOUNS** Jordan Smith, Jamaal, Europe, Snoopy, Friday, Tower Bridge

**EXERCISE A** Underline each noun in the sentences below. Then, write *C* above the noun if it is a common noun, or *P* if it is a proper noun.

**Example** 1. <sup>P</sup>Victor traveled across the <sup>C</sup>ocean to <sup>P</sup>Africa. [*Victor* names a specific person. *Ocean* names any one of a group of things. *Africa* names a specific place.]

1. Look at these photographs of my friend James, who is a relative of Victor. [Which words name any one of a group of persons or things? Which words name specific persons or things?]
2. Did the two men visit Madagascar, a large island near Africa?
3. Courage and curiosity are two qualities you will find in my friends.
4. Many different countries make up the large continent of Africa.
5. On his journey back to America, Victor sailed on the *Princess*.

## Compound Nouns

A **compound noun** is made up of two or more words used together as a single noun. Compound nouns might be written as one word, as separate words, or as a hyphenated word.

**ONE WORD** chairperson, hallway, basketball, spacecraft, oversight

**SEPARATE WORDS** Professor Johnson, mail carrier, Rhode Island, near miss

**HYPHENATED WORD** jack-of-all-trades, Austria-Hungary, sit-ups, self-respect

**EXERCISE B** Underline each noun in the following sentences. Then, if the noun is compound, write *CD* for *compound* above it.

**Example:** <sup>CD</sup>  
Lucy planted forget-me-nots in the flower bed.

6. In gym class, Coach Ellis led the students through a set of twenty push-ups. [Which words name persons or things? Which nouns are made up of more than one word?]
7. After the children tossed snowballs, they built a snowman on the sidewalk.
8. Did Dad change the batteries in the smoke detector that is in the family room?
9. You should read *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan, a winner of the National Book Award.
10. My sister-in-law, a singer in a band, also plays the guitar.

### Collective Nouns

A **collective noun** is a word that names a group of people, animals, or things.

**COLLECTIVE NOUNS** audience, chorus, committee, flock, herd,  
batch, bundle, cluster

**EXERCISE C** Underline the collective noun in each of the following pairs of nouns.

**Examples** 1. batch biscuits [Batch names a group of things.]

2. robins flock [Flock names a group of animals.]

11. collection            DVDs            [Which word names a group of things?]
12. wolves                pack            [Which word names a group of animals?]
13. gnats                 swarm
14. family                children
15. players               team
16. employees            staff
17. squad                 officers
18. council                advisors
19. whales                pod
20. Congress              senators

## Answer Keys:

1. Look at these <sup>C</sup> photographs of my <sup>C</sup> friend James, who is a <sup>P</sup> relative of <sup>C</sup> Victor. <sup>P</sup>
2. Did the two <sup>C</sup> men visit <sup>P</sup> Madagascar, a large <sup>C</sup> island near <sup>P</sup> Africa?
3. <sup>C</sup> Courage and <sup>C</sup> curiosity are two <sup>C</sup> qualities you will find in my <sup>C</sup> friends.
4. Many different <sup>C</sup> countries make up the large <sup>C</sup> continent of <sup>P</sup> Africa.
5. On his <sup>C</sup> journey back to <sup>P</sup> America, <sup>P</sup> Victor sailed on the <sup>P</sup> Princess.
6. In gym <sup>CD</sup> class, <sup>CD</sup> Coach Ellis led the students through a set of twenty push-ups.
7. After the children tossed <sup>CD</sup> snowballs, they built a <sup>CD</sup> snowman on the <sup>CD</sup> sidewalk.
8. Did Dad change the <sup>CD</sup> batteries in the <sup>CD</sup> smoke detector that is in the <sup>CD</sup> family room?
9. You should read <sup>CD</sup> Homeless Bird by <sup>CD</sup> Gloria Whelan, a <sup>CD</sup> winner of the National Book Award.
10. My <sup>CD</sup> sister-in-law, a singer in a band, also plays the guitar.

- 11. collection
- 12. pack
- 13. swarm
- 14. family
- 15. team

- 16. staff
- 17. squad
- 18. council
- 19. pod
- 20. Congress