### 1A. Countable nouns vs. uncountable nouns (similarities and dissimilarities)

Countable nouns are persons, places, things, or ideas which literally can be counted and used in the plural. Most count nouns in English are formed by adding –s, such as *cats*, *dogs*, and *birds*. If the plural is pronounced as a separate syllable, the regular plural is spelled –es, as in *churches* and *watches*. To form the plural of a word ending in a consonant +y, change the *y* to *i* and add –es. If a word ends in a consonant +o, the plural is formed by either adding an –s or an –es. Unfortunately, there is no way to know in advance which form the word takes; the correct plural spelling has to be looked up in a dictionary. Another spelling change occurs with words ending in –f or –fe. These words form their plural by changing the –f to a –v, e.g., half becomes halves, loaf becomes loaves, and life becomes lives.

Since English borrows many words from other languages, some count noun plurals have irregular forms because they retain the foreign spelling of their plural. Many of these words come from Latin, e.g., one alumnus becomes two alumni, a memorandum becomes many memoranda, and one formula becomes many formulae. Additionally, some words have the same form for their singular and plural form, such as cod, fish, sheep, and deer. Again, the spelling of these irregular plurals should be checked in a dictionary.

Unlike count nouns, uncount nouns cannot be made plural because they do not refer to nouns that can be counted. Instead, many uncount nouns refer to general categories of things, such as *luggage* or *tools*. Like *tools*, many uncount nouns look plural in form but are used as singular nouns, e.g., scissors, binoculars, and stairs. Uncount nouns come in a variety of categories, but the some common categories are abstractions like *beauty* and *luck*, food items like *salt* and *pepper*, and languages like *English* and *Spanish*. If an uncount noun is used as a plural, it typically means "different kinds of." For example, if you asked, "Where are the salts?" the meaning is not "Where are X number of salts?" but "Where are the different kinds of salt? I'm looking for table salt, sea salt, kosher salt, etc."

Distinguishing between count and uncount nouns is especially important when determining which article to use. Articles used with count nouns must agree in number; you wouldn't say, "I have one dogs," but "I have one dog."

Both count and uncount nouns are common nouns, which means they refer to general, non-specific people, places, things or ideas. Unless they begin a sentence, they are not capitalized.



# 1B. Case marking in English and realization thereof

Since English is a synthetic or inflectional language, the only obvious case marking is for the possessive (genitive) case. The most common way to denote a singular possessive in English is by adding an apostrophe +s, such as in "girl's phone." If the possessor is plural and does not end in -s, the possessive is formed like the singular possessive: add an apostrophe +s. For example, "men's bathroom" or "mice's cage." However, if the plural possessive already ends in -s, like the words *ladies* and *cats*, just add an apostrophe to create "ladies' bathroom" or "cats' bowls."

English does not formally distinguish between the subject and object case forms for most words. Word order is more important in English than case marking. Different functions are indicated by word placement in the sentence.

## 1C. Grading of adjectives. Adjective subclassification in terms of grading

Adjectives can be graded to express degrees of meaning. There are three levels of gradation in English: positive, comparative, and superlative. The positive or basic form is the normal state of the adjective, e.g. big. "That is a big dog." The comparative form is used to show a difference between two or more states, e.g. bigger. "That dog is bigger than the other one." Finally, the superlative form is used to denote an even greater change from the original, e.g. biggest. "That Great Dane is the biggest dog I've ever seen!"

Adjectives that show gradation are considered true adjectives. By definition, true adjectives immediately precede the noun they modify, they have comparative and superlative forms, they can be used as predicate adjectives, and they are an open class.

True adjectives are either short (one syllable) or long (two or more syllables). To form the comparative of a short adjective, add –er, e.g. *taller* and *smaller*. If the word already ends in –e, add an –r, as in *larger* and *wider*.

To form the superlative of a short adjective, add the –est ending, as in tallest and smallest. Similarly, if the adjective already ends in –e, just add the –st, as in largest and widest.

A special spelling rule applies to both the comparative and superlative forms of short nouns. If the word has a final consonant sound preceded by one vowel sound, the final consonant is doubled, as in the preceding examples of "bigger" and "biggest." If the final consonant sound is preceded by two vowels, do not double the final consonant. For example, "clean" becomes "cleaner" and "cleanest."

To form the comparative of a long adjective, use the word <u>more</u>, as in *more beautiful* and *more honest*. To form the superlative, use the word <u>most</u>, e.g., *most beautiful* and *most honest*.



## 1D. The definite article in English

"The" is the only definite article in English. It is used to indicate a specific noun. "The" is usually unstressed and has two pronunciations, which depend on the word it is preceding. Before consonant sounds, "the" is pronounced [ðə]. The pronunciation changes to [ði] before vowel sounds.

"The" can be used with all types of common nouns, but in practice, there are four situations that determine the use of the definite article. First, "the" can be used if the noun "the" is modifying has already been mentioned or is "discourse old." For example, "I didn't know what page the topic on nouns began, so I checked the table of contents." Second, "the" can be used if the noun its modifying is further identified by postmodifiers: "The book that I'm reading has 32 chapters." (The italicized phrase explains which book, so "the" can be used as a premodifier.) Third, it can be used if the speaker/writer can expect that the reader/hearer understands which thing "the" is referring to as a part of normal expectations. For example, "I met the mayor when I visited city hall." Finally, "the" can be used in cases where the noun referred to is unique, as in "the sun" or "the horizon."

In some situations, "the" can also be used with proper nouns, especially if there is a post-noun modifier that provides some special information about that person. For example, in the sentence, "The Katie *who lives upstairs* is studying botany," <u>the</u> is used to distinguish which girl named Katie the speaker is referring to, and the phrase "who lives upstairs" is a post-noun modifier.

The definite article can also be used with other names that are not proper nouns: royal titles and organizational titles. We would refer to "the prime minister," "the CEO," and "the secretary."

Additionally, the definite article is regularly used with place names, particularly plural place names such as mountain ranges and island chains. For example, "the Alps" are in Europe, and "the Aleutians" are islands off the coast of Alaska. The definite article is used with singular nouns that name rivers, seas and oceans, and canals. For example, "The Dan River flows through my hometown. The Atlantic Ocean is the eastern border of North Carolina. I'd love to take a cruise through the Panama Canal."

Finally, "the" can be used with some public facilities, monuments, buildings, etc., if the places are well known. "We drove across the Union Street Bridge and stayed at the Holiday Inn downtown."



## 1E. The indefinite articles in English

When the speaker/writer is not referring to a specific noun, he/she can use an indefinite article. There are two indefinite articles in English: "a/an" and "some." The form "a" is used before nouns that begin with a consonant sound; "an" is used before nouns that begin with a vowel sound. "A/an" are singular because they derive from a word meaning "one," and "some" is plural.

Unlike the definite article, indefinite articles are not usable with all nouns. Indefinite articles are more like adjectives in that they must agree in number with the noun they are modifying. For example, "a" or "an" can only be used with the first mention of a singular countable noun. "A/an" signals that the writer/speaker does not expect the audience to have any prior knowledge of the noun being modified, e.g. "I am reading a book." The writer/speaker doesn't need the audience to know which book.

In addition, "a/an" can never be used with plural count nouns. Instead, "some" is used, as in, "I checked out some books from the library." "Some" is also typically used with singular uncount nouns like "some homework." It is also most commonly used with singular nouns that have a plural form. A native speaker would say "some scissors" or "some trousers" rather than "a scissors" or "a trousers."

### 1F. <u>Demonstratives</u> as noun premodifiers in English

Demonstratives are a type of adjective used as premodifiers to describe relative closeness in space or time. This means the have a deictic function.

The two demonstratives that refer to nouns or noun phrases that are spatially and/or temporally nearby are "this" (singular) and "these" (plural); these are called proximal demonstratives. The two demonstratives that refer to nouns or noun phrases that are spatially and/or temporally farther away are "that" (singular) and "those" plural; these words are distal demonstratives.

Both the proximal and distal demonstratives can show a gradation of meaning, but this is dependant upon the location of the speaker/writer. In spoken English, "this table" could quickly become "that table" as the speaker moves farther away from the table he or she is referring to.

In conversational English, "this" and "that" can be used to introduced a new topic, as in, "I met *this* guy the other day at the mall." In this example, the use of the demonstrative signals that the speaker has a specific person in mind but is aware that the listener does not yet know who the speaker is talking about. It also signals that the speaker is introducing this person as a new topic of conversation; the hearer expects the speaker to tell him/her something about what happened when the speaker met that person.



#### 1G. <u>Relative clauses</u> in English: Restrictive vs. nonrestrictive

A relative clause is a sentence-like structure with its own subject-verb complex. It is not a complete sentence, however, because by definition, it is bound to an immediately preceding noun phrase. Relative clauses are always introduced by either a relative pronoun (who, whose, whom, which, that) or a relative adverb (where, when). Relative clauses can also be called adjective clauses because they function as adjectives; they provide more information about the noun or noun phrase they postmodify.

There are two types of relative clause: restrictive and nonrestrictive. A restrictive relative clause defines or classifies the noun phrase it is modifying. It offers a narrower meaning if the its antecedent. For example, in the sentence "My aunt *who is a nurse* works at a nursing home," the relative clause "who is a nurse" lets the audience know that the speaker/writer must have more than one aunt, since he/she needed to clarify which aunt is the one that works as a nurse. If the sentence were just, "My aunt works at a nursing home," the audience would assume the speaker/writer only has one aunt.

Unlike restrictive clauses, nonrestrictive clauses do not add information that is essential to the meaning of the sentence. They provide additional information that could be left out and are set off by commas in a sentence. Stylistically, nonrestrictive clauses tend to emphasize the information being shared. For example, in the sentence, "My aunt, who is a nurse, works at a nursing home," the nonrestrictive relative clause puts a spotlight on the fact that "my aunt" is a nurse. She could be the only aunt, or the speaker/writer could just be bragging about this aunt's position.



## 1H. Participial phrases as noun postmodifiers in English

A participial phrase involves a verb in its participle form and the other elements needed by the verb for completeness of structure that is postmodifying a noun. There are two types of participial phrases in English: –ing participle (present participle) and –en participle (past participle). The noun being modified acts as the subject of the verb in participle form. Since participial phrases act as adjectives, they can also be either restrictive or nonrestrictive.

To create the –ing participle, use the base form of a verb and add –ing. The only unusual forms are from regular spelling changes for a final silent –e and doubled consonants. For example, "hope" becomes "hoping" and "hop" becomes "hopping."

Since the –ing participle refers to an action in the present, it can refer to events that are either an ongoing state or a permanent condition. In the sentence "The man waxing the floor almost slipped," it's unclear if the man was waxing the floor last night or if he is waxing the floor at this moment. What is clear, however, is that the man the speaker/writer is referring to is the one who was at some point waxing the floor.

When used as an adjective, the –en participial phrase can cause some confusion because the regular past participle form of many verbs commonly ends in –ed. For example, the sentence "The woman angered by the uneven haircut demanded to speak to the manager," contains two verbs ending in –ed, but only one of them ("angered") is part of an –en participial phrase. "Angered by the uneven haircut" is used as a postmodification in this example to describe which woman demanded to see the manager. Typically, past participial phrases like this one are in the passive voice, showing the noun or noun phrase was acted upon by something.



## 11. The English personal-pronoun system and its subcategorizations

A pronoun is a part of speech that substitutes for a noun or noun phrase. It can also refer to the speaker and/ or someone else or to the addressee and/or somebody else. In English, there are four subcategories of personal pronouns: person, case, number and gender.

Personal pronouns have different forms depending on their person (first, second, and third), number (singular or plural), and case (subject, object, and possessive). The first and second person pronouns do not indicate gender, but the third person pronouns are different for masculine, feminine, or neutral forms.

In their pronominal form, possessive pronouns act as true pronouns because they can function like standard nouns: They can replace nouns acting as a subject, an object or a complement of linking verbs. In the sentence, "Mine was the only car in the parking lot," the pronoun "mine" functions as a noun as the subject, but in the sentence, "My car was the only one in the parking lot," the pronoun "my" — which is still in the first person possessive — now functions as an adjective clarifying whose car was in the parking lot.

The following chart shows the personal pronouns in English:

