



What is a **noun**?

Here are some **nouns**.

painter

Mom

gardener

George Washington

brother

woman

student

Suzy

How are all these **nouns** alike?

They are all _____.

Can you name some **nouns** like these?

Here are some more nouns. These nouns are different from the first nouns we looked at.

home

France

beach

restaurant

downtown

Los Angeles

farm

museum

How are these nouns different from the first nouns we saw?

What is the same about this group of nouns?

They are all _____.

Can you think of some nouns like these?

Look at these nouns.

telephone

sign

tractor

purse

apple

book

tree

Liberty Bell

Are these nouns people? Are they places?
What is the same about these nouns?

They are all _____.

Animals like camel, cat, and parrot are thing nouns too.

Can you think of some nouns like these?

Let's identify one more type of noun. Look at these nouns.

honor

peace

belief

love

fear

happiness

friendship

truth

bravery

Can you think of some way to describe these nouns?

These nouns are called **abstract**. They are also called **ideas**. You can't touch them, get to know them, or go to them.

Can you think of some **abstract** nouns?

Classification

Here are some nouns. Look at them and put them in the right place in the chart below.

candle sister dog village

Sam anger Spain

beauty flower trust librarian

kitchen computer Mrs. May

desert trouble

Person	Place	Thing	Idea

What if you see a word you have never heard before? How will you know if it's a noun? Look at this phrase.

a muddy skorge

Skorge is a made up word. What kind of word is it? You probably have an idea that it is a noun. Is it a person, place, thing, or idea? We don't know. There must be some other way we know that **skorge** is a noun. How do we know?

To answer this question we have to learn more about nouns. We can't only look at what they mean. We have to learn what they look like, what we can do with them, and where to find them in a sentence.

What can we do with a noun?

Look at these nouns.

sandbox

Iceland

daydream

goldfish

mailman

junkyard

scarecrow

waterfall

What do you notice about these nouns?

We can combine a noun with another word and make a new noun called a **compound** noun.

Can you think of some **compound** nouns?

Put a line between the two parts of each **compound** noun above. Like this

Draw a line from one word to another to make compound nouns.

foot

fast

break

rise

black

ball

sun

board

How many compound nouns can you make combining these words? Some words may be used more than once.

mail

book

ship

shell

box

space

shore

man

store

sea

In each box draw a picture of one of the compound nouns you made. Write the compound noun. Write the type of noun.

What else can we do with nouns? We can describe them. Look at these phrases.

red apple

rotten apple

blue sky

stormy sky

soft cat

stray cat

We can describe nouns to tell more about them. The words we use to describe are called **adjectives**. Think of two ways to describe each of these nouns.

	duck
	duck
	tree
	tree

	dream
	dream
	bicycle
	bicycle

Another thing we can do with nouns is count them. Look at these phrases.

three avocados

one million cats

ten horses

six pickles

seven women

one fence

Can we count all nouns? Look at these nouns. Try to put a number before them.

milk

rice

mud

peace

Nouns that can be counted are called **count** nouns. Nouns that can't be counted are called **mass** nouns. Think of some nouns and try to determine if they are **count** nouns or **mass** nouns.

How does a noun change when we count it?
Look at these nouns.

cats

boxes

days

trees

children

buttercups

noses

twigs

trucks

feet

foxes

Can you tell what is the same about all of these nouns?

They are all **plural**, or more than one. When a noun is **singular** there is just one.

Think of some nouns. What is the singular form of each noun? What is the plural form?

List all the plural nouns from page 12 in one column. Write them in their singular form in the other column.

Singular	Plural

What are some ways that we change nouns to make them plural?

Do you notice two that are *really* different? Which are they? These are called **irregular** plurals.

We can tell to whom or what a noun belongs. Look at these phrases.

his home

my book

your raisins

Another word for own is possess. In grammar, when you tell who owns what, it is called the **possessive**. **His**, **my**, and **your** are **possessive** words. Can you think of some other words we use to show ownership?

Put a **possessive** word before each of these nouns.

	hat
	cookie
	journey
	breakfast

Sometimes we use a noun to describe who or what owns what. Look at these phrases.

Jonathan's apple the horse's mane

Africa's rivers

a flower's petals

the bee's stripes

Molly's penny

Now look at just one phrase.

Jonathan's apple

Does Jonathan own the apple, or does the apple own Jonathan?

In this phrase, **Jonathan's** is the possessive word. Which noun has been made possessive in the other phrases?

For each noun above, put the original form in one column, and the possessive form in the next column.

How is the original form of each noun different from the possessive form?

Think of two nouns. Make one of them possessive, so that it owns the other noun. You might have to put **a**, **an**, or **the** before the possessive noun to make your phrase sound right.

Where can we find a noun?

We have seen many types of words. Can you remember some of them? Do nouns come before or after those words?

To begin to answer that question, let's look back at some nouns that have been described somehow.

red apple

blue sky

soft cat

Which comes first, the noun, or the adjective?

Look at the examples that you came up with on page 9. Which word came first? Can you think of some more examples? Can you put the words in another order?

So, where is one place we can find a noun?

We can find a noun _____

_____.

I will make up some new words. They will be nouns. I will put them in a sentence. See if you can find them. Label the made up nouns like this

n
|
I found a giant modge.

I saw a red gogg.

There was an old stook.

A small plister was having lunch.

Who ate the yummy ness?

The wet jurgle got out of the rain.

Did you find the made up nouns? How did you find them?

Where else can we find nouns? Let's look at nouns that have been counted.

three avocados one million cats

seven women

Which comes first in these phrases, the noun or the number?

Can you think of some more examples? Can the order be changed?

So, where is another place we can find a noun? We can find a noun _____

_____.

What if we count a noun, *and* describe it?

You try it. Here are some nouns, descriptive adjectives, and numbers. Pick a noun, a descriptive adjective, and a number. Write them in the correct order. Don't forget to change the noun to its plural form if you pick a number that is more than one.

nouns	adjectives	numbers
cat	silly	five
boy	orange	one
lake	wet	two hundred
banana	furry	thirty-two

In what order did you put the words? Can you change the order, or is just one word order correct?

Now let's look at possessives again.
Do you remember these phrases?

his home

my book

your raisins

Where is the noun in these phrases? Is it before or after the possessive word? Can the order be changed?

Now look at this phrase again.

Jonathan's apple

In this phrase the noun **Jonathan** has been changed so that it is possessive. We could also say

his apple

In both phrases, the possessive word comes first. A noun comes after a possessive word.

Now we can make longer phrases. Let's make phrases with a noun, a descriptive adjective, a number, *and* a possessive word. I'll give you some words. You pick one of each type and put them in order.

nouns	adjectives	numbers	possessives
shark	chocolate	ten	its
milk	soft	fifty-five	my
pond	smelly	three hundred	her
bean	orange	two	your

In what order did you put the words? Can the order be changed?

Try making phrases using a noun and words from just two or three other columns. What do you notice about the order?

Let's try to find some made up nouns again.
This time we'll look for nouns in phrases.
Label them like this

n
|
my eight green mokes

his three wet hupples

one mighty carn

your three hundred plarks

its nask

her dark boffs

Let's describe one more place where we can find a noun. Look at these phrases.

the muskrat a peach an ocean

The words **the**, **a**, and **an** are a new kind of word called a **determiner**. Sometimes they are called **noun markers** or **articles**.

Does the noun come before or after the determiner? Can the order be changed?

Look at the phrases you made on page 22. Try replacing the possessive word with a determiner. What is the order of the words now? Can the order be changed? Can you use both a possessive word and a determiner?

Find the nouns in these sentences and label them. Some of them are real nouns. Some are made up. Some sentences have more than one noun.

The ten quick horses rode away fast.

A bottle of nasty kerpluggins was found.

My big green tarm is on the hill.

The nine pink flowers were put in a vase.

An ossup is coming over.

Your five blocks are stacked.

Teacher's Notes (and answers)

This book is meant to be a child's introduction to the noun from a descriptive point of view, but not incompatible with a prescriptive point of view. (Definitions and explanations of these view are found below.) It is meant to be a foundation upon which to build in either direction. If you plan to use a traditional program after this, or along side it, this book is meant to stretch your child's understanding of grammar beyond that which is taught in traditional grammar by teaching them to look at it a little differently without teaching them things that will later be contradicted by a traditional program. If you are planning to follow this with a structural program, this is meant to be a foundation for just that. This book was written with the intention that it be used by a 6-8 year old. If your child has had no introduction to structural grammar you may wish to use this book with an older child and go through it faster. If your child does not come up with all the answers on his own, that's okay. You can give your child the answers and he will then see the connection. What's important is for him to have a chance to look at grammar as something that he can evaluate, test, and describe rather than something that is just handed to him to memorize.

Descriptive grammar, according to www.wikipedia.org, is:

*...the work of objectively analyzing and describing how language is spoken (or how it was spoken in the past) by a group of people in a speech community. All scholarly research in linguistics is descriptive; like all other sciences, its aim is to observe the linguistic world as it is, without the bias of **preconceived ideas about how it ought to be.***

The bolded section defines prescriptive grammar. Descriptive grammar recognizes language as a natural phenomenon that does and will evolve despite all efforts, no matter how passionate, to fossilize it. Prescriptive grammar, on the other hand, instructs on the rules one "ought" to follow with regard to language.

Isn't prescriptive grammar what a child needs to learn in order to write scholarly papers, impress college admissions folks, etc.? Yes. Prescriptive grammar is without a doubt what one should study to improve his skills as an academic writer.

Then why should a child learn descriptive grammar? Here are a few reasons. I imagine there are more.

It gives something more of language to the analytical mind. Instead of showing a child that language is only a set of rules, made by someone else, that the child must memorize and follow, it shows the child that language is an enigma that changes over time. He can observe language in its current form, form a hypothesis about some certain word (like how it should be categorized) and test that hypothesis. His findings today may be different than those of the past and the future.

If a child speaks a dialect with grammar very different from the prescriptive grammar required in school, it may be of benefit to the child to learn the rules for his own dialect. He can see that they are equally as complex as those of prescriptive grammar, and equally as valid in terms of language. When the child is then learning prescriptive grammar he doesn't have to think of his own grammar as altogether "wrong." He can see the difference between living grammar and writing conventions.

It gives the child a clear picture of why people speak the way they do, rather than the way they "ought to." Is it because people are wrong, uneducated, unintelligent, lazy? Certainly these ideas are not uncommon, but they are incorrect. Learning about language as a natural and evolving phenomenon, and learning that the "mistakes" in the grammar of other dialects are actually rule-bound and correct for that dialect, gives a broader perspective on language.

It gives a format for learning about other languages without actually learning them. One can analyze the idiosyncrasies of any documented language using the tools learned in a good descriptive grammar program. This does not take the place of attempting to gain fluency in a second language, but it does allow the student to explore so many more languages and the possibilities within them without having to study all of them as a second language, something which is surely an impossible feat.

Page 1:

Answers: people; answers vary

Notes: If your child does not pick up on this you may want to give them a visual clue. Try looking each of these up on the internet and/or cutting pictures out of magazines. Your child might like to make a collage of people nouns.

Page 2:

Answers: places; answers vary

Notes: If your child is having trouble coming up with this answer you may want to ask the following leading questions.

“Can you find these on a map?” *yes*

“What kinds of things can you find on a map?” *places* (If the he doesn't have the answer yet you could continue with the next question.)

“Can you find people on a map?”

Page 3:

Answers: things; answers vary

Notes: The answer to this is actually on the page. That's okay. *Thing* is such a general term it may be difficult for a child to produce unless this is information he has already learned. What's important is that he again see the method of looking at what is there and trying to describe it. If your child produces answers other than *thing* you should supportively accept them. If his answer isn't general enough to describe all the examples on the page you can point that out. If it is general enough you can tell him that that's a great way to describe them, but they are usually described as *things*.

Page 4:

Answers: accept any reasonable answer; answers vary

Notes: It seems unlikely that your child will provide the answer *idea* or *abstract* when asked to describe the nouns on this page. The terms are provided because they are traditionally used to describe these types of nouns.

Page 5:

Answers:

Person	Place	Thing	Idea
sister	village	candle	anger
Sam	Spain	dog	beauty
librarian	kitchen	flower	trust
Mrs. May	desert	computer	trouble

Notes: Here is a more hands-on way to do this. Your child can do this instead of or in addition to filling out the chart. Fold a piece of construction paper in half lengthwise. Cut the top half into 4 sections. Now you should have four flaps that can be lifted. On top of the four flaps your child can write *person, place, thing, idea*. Under each flap he can list, draw, or paste (after cutting them from a magazine) examples. The *idea* nouns will require more creativity, but should not be impossible.

Page 6:

Notes: Upon reading the phrase a *muddy skorge*, but before continuing, you could have your child picture a muddy skorge in his mind. Ask him what he saw. Was it a person, place, thing/animal?

Page 7:

Answers: They are each two words put together.; sand | box, tree | house, day | dream, gold | fish, mail | man, junk | yard, scare | crow, water | fall

Notes: To help your child find the answer to this question cover up one part of one of the compound words. You can use your finger, a piece of paper, or have him use his own finger. Then ask, “Now what does it say? Is ____ a word?” Then cover up the other part of the word and ask the same thing. You can do that with more than one word if necessary. You could also show him that this is not possible with other words. You could use any word from the page that is not a compound word and show that it is not two whole words put together.

Page 8:

Answers: mailman, mailbox, bookstore, spaceship, spaceman, seashore, seaman, seashell

Notes: Your child may come up with some answers in the second section that you are not sure about. You can always look it up in the dictionary and see if it exists. You might want to ask your child first, “What is a _____?” He may have invented a word, and it may just already exist. It’s good for your child to learn about and experiment with the malleability of language.

The only compound nouns your child can make from this list are noun+noun compounds. As seen in the list on page 8, there are other possibilities. These nouns were selected in an effort to avoid a conflict between prescriptive and descriptive viewpoints with regard to compound nouns. In prescriptive grammar the first word in a compound word is often called an adjective “because it is acting like an adjective.” For example, *book bag* might be considered the adjective *book*, plus the noun *bag*. From a structural stand point *book bag* is a compound noun made up of two nouns.

Also from a descriptive point of view, two words need not be written as one word to be considered a compound word, like *book bag* above. Compound nouns are sometimes written as two separate words, are sometimes hyphenated, and are sometimes written as one word. The combining of these words in writing is often only a matter of time.

Page 9:

Answers: *Answers will vary. Here are the “types” for the list of compound nouns given for page 8.* person, thing, place, thing, person, place, person, thing

Notes: Your child may want or need to do this on a bigger piece of paper to allow for a grander picture or larger handwriting.

Page 10:

Answers: Answers will vary.

Notes: The adjectives in the examples were chosen to show how your idea of a noun can change a lot depending on the description. You may wish to draw this idea out further with your child. You could tell them just one phrase in a pair and ask them to describe what it makes them think about, further describe the object, tell how they feel about it. They could also draw pictures of the pairs of phrases. The words your child chooses to describe the nouns in the activity do not need to differ greatly.

Page 11:

Answers: Answers will vary.

Notes: In prescriptive grammar numbers are adjectives. In linguistics they are a more complex issue. You may choose to tell your child at this time that numbers are adjectives too.

The idea of mass nouns may require further illustration. Your child may want to count cartons of milk, grains of rice, or types of milk or rice. Here is an activity that may help. Get a large container and a small container. Fill them with something countable (legos, blocks, spoons, whatever you have available). Ask these questions:

“Which container has more (legos, blocks, etc.) ?” “*The (larger container).*”

“How do you know?” “*It’s bigger. More legos fit inside.*”

“Let’s count the _____ in each to check.” (count them) “Were you right?” “*Yes.*”

Next, dump out the items and fill the containers with water or milk. Ask the same first two questions and then ask if he is able to count the liquid. If he suggests measuring it and counting tablespoons or some other measurement explain that that is not the same. He cannot pull out an individual water and count it. If your child counts the containers and says that in each case there is one you may say and do the following.

“Yes, there is one cup and one bucket and each of them is currently holding water, but you are not counting the water. (Pour the water out.) See, there is still one cup and one bucket, and each of them is currently holding air/empty.”

Page 12:

Answers: The first answer is on the page. There is more than one of each.;
Answers will vary.

Notes: When your child gets to the first question you may choose to keep the answer covered and draw out the discovery process. You could draw or find pictures of some of the words in both their singular and plural form and see if your child can see the difference. It may be better to do this in steps. First compare pictures of two of with pictures of one. Then once your child has either gotten the answer or decided that the answer is that there are two of each, you can show pictures of more than two.

Ask your child if he can find the compound noun among the examples.
(buttercups)

Page 13:

Answers:

Singular	Plural
cat	cats
box	boxes
day	days
tree	trees
child	children
buttercup	buttercups
nose	noses
twig	twigs
truck	trucks
foot	feet
fox	foxes

add /s/ or /es/; child/children, foot/feet

Notes: If your child has trouble answering the first question you may want to ask about one pair at a time.

“Look at *truck* and *trucks*. How is the word *trucks* different from the word *truck*?” “*Trucks* has an ‘s’ at the end.”

You may want to look at a similar example next, like nose/noses, then move onto one like fox/foxes.

You may need to write these in as your child dictates them, or your child may need to write on different a separate sheet of paper lined according to his handwriting ability. You could draw a big set of columns on 12x18 construction paper instead.

Page 14:

Answers: my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose, mine, yours, theirs;
answers will vary

Notes: Only the first 7 words above behave the way we want for our purposes. Those 7, along with *whose*, are considered adjectives in prescriptive grammar and if you wish to tell your child that now you may. They are not considered adjectives in structural grammar (because they don't behave that way). If your child gives some of the other examples (other than the first 7) you can lead them to more discovery after they've filled out the second part by asking if all of the possessive words they came up with will work or only some of them.

Page 15:

Answers: Jonathan owns the apple; horse, Africa, flower, bee, Molly

Page 16:

Answers:

Jonathan	Jonathan's
horse	horse's
Africa	Africa's
flower	flower's
bee	bee's
Molly	Molly's

; 's is added; answers will vary

Page 17:

Answers: nouns, compound words, descriptive words (adjectives), numbers, possessive words; adjective; adjective; answers will vary; no; after an adjective

Notes: To make a tactile activity ordering adjectives and nouns, you can use index cards. Write nouns on some and adjectives on others. Have your child arrange them to make phrases. Save them to use again later. In addition to or instead of index cards you could print them out on perforated business cards, or print them out on small address labels and stick the labels to blocks.

Page 18:

Answers:

the “nouns” are *gogg*, *stook*, *plister*, *ness*, *jurple*; they are after describing words (adjectives)

Notes: Labeling the nouns in this way (rather than underlining them, circling them, or using any other means) is meant to be a first step in the structural analysis of a complete sentence.

If your child has trouble with this you can try putting a real noun in the place of *modge* and talking about how the word *giant* describes it. Then you can move on to *gogg* and see if they can find the describing word *red*.

Page 19:

Answers: the number; answers vary; no; after a number word

Notes: If you made some sort of tactile nouns and adjectives before, now you can make numbers to go with them. You could make plural affix cards to go with (s, es) or you could put the plural form of each noun on the other side of the card or block. For irregular plurals the plural will have to be on the other side or on a separate card or block.

Page 20:

Answers: answers vary; number - adjective - noun; you cannot change the order

Page 21:

Answers: after the possessive word; no

Notes: If you've been making cards or blocks with the different types of words, you can now make some with possessive words. For possessive nouns, you may wish to make separate cards or blocks with possessive nouns or just a card with 's on it.

Page 22:

Answers: possessive - number - adjective - noun; they remain in that order even if some of them are not used. For example: possessive - adjective - noun, or possessive - number - noun.

Notes: Your child may not come up with this answer on his own. He may need to be prompted with more specific questions. Here's an example.

“If there is no adjective, does the possessive word still have to come before the number or can it come between the number and the noun?”

This is easy to show using columns. You can print out a blank table and have your child write words in. They should always put the possessive word in the first column, the number in the second column, the adjective in the second column, and the noun in the last column. When a word isn't used there will be a blank space in one column.

If you've been using cards or blocks you can do the same thing. Lay the cards or blocks out in columns. Your child must pull down one noun card. For each of the other columns he may choose to pull down a card or leave it empty.

Page 23:

Answers: *hupples, carn, plarks, nask, boffs*

Notes: As your child does this page, or after he has finished, you can talk about all the signals he can use or has used on this page to identify the made up nouns. In these phrases the nouns are always at the end and your child might give that answer first, but you should discuss further. You can ask questions like

“Are any of them plural?” “Yes. ”

“How can you tell?” “*It comes after a number. It has -s or -es at the end.*”

“Do any of them come after descriptive adjectives” “Yes. ”

“Which ones?” “*Hupples, carn, and boffs.*”

“Do any of them come after just a possessive word?”

“Do any of them come after a possessive word, a number, and a descriptive adjective?”

And so on.

Page 24:

Answers: after; no; determiner - number - adjective - noun; no; no

Notes: The possessive words are called possessive determiners in structural grammar. This may be of interest to your child so you may tell him that now if you wish. Possessive words are considered adjectives in prescriptive grammar.

Page 25:

Answers: horses, *kerpluggins, tarm*, hill, flowers, vase, *ossup*, blocks

Notes: Like you did before, you can discuss with your child all the signals for nounhood in each sentence. If your child wishes, he can write his own sentences with real and/or made up nouns and show you the signals he used.