The Noun Game: when is a noun NOT a person, place or thing?

what about being, nothingness, karma, phoneme?

Nouns all behave similarly in sentences, so while we don’t necessarily have “meaning” definitions that work for all nouns, we can describe them syntactically.
What is syntax? the arrangement of words into strings that form utterances

parsing: breaking sentences down into their component parts

loosely, syntax is word order

We recognize sentences that are grammatical / acceptable

We also know when an utterance is well-formed or ill-formed

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

The policeman who was walking his beat which was in a tough neighborhood looked the man who he saw in a streetcar up.
Word function gives a clue for placement, since the word order for a language like English is relatively fixed:

- adjectives come before nouns: a *general approach to a subject*

we say that adjectives *modify* the noun—what does that mean?

arrange these words in order:

*the the students perplexed chapter reread*

*the perplexed students reread the chapter:*

why does *perplexed* come before a noun?  
why can’t *perplexed* come before *chapter*? 

How do we know how to do this?  
We call this knowledge, “native speaker intuition”
**syntax:** words combine systematically to form phrases and clauses; clauses combine to form utterances

Can a sentence consist of just one single word? Can it be something less than a word?

A sentence is a syntactic unit that meets certain criteria. What are they?

An utterance may be anything we say.
what are the parts of speech? (popular term) / lexical categories (the more technical term)

    they describe classes of words that behave similarly in a language contrary to the NOUN IS A PERSON, PLACE, OR THING mentality,

    they can’t strictly be defined by meaning

form and function: instead they’re more easily defined by morphology (form) and syntax (function)

what’s the difference between form and function?

when is a door not a door? How do you know what this means? wherein lies the joke?

fast car/company car  adj+n / noun (functioning as adj) + n

what’s the direct object in

    Students say that they never learned grammar in high school
open class lexical categories (parts of speech): -- they accept new members

nouns – can you figure out if a word is a noun without knowing what it means?

*The flibs keep me on my toes. What’s a flib? What part of speech is flib?*

semantic description: person, place, thing, state

morphological description: forms plural; irregular plurals -s is a plural morpheme, but what’s the morpheme in *women* or *fish*?

what about foreign plurals? *fungi, axes, phenomena, media, data?*

may have one of a set of derivational suffixes (-ion, -ment, -ness, -er, -ess, -ity, -ship, -dom)

count nouns v. mass nouns: *less/fewer*

syntactic position, description: Det____ DET ADJ _____

No one definition of a noun is exhaustive.
adjectives:

express qualities, describe things – but that’s inadequate, because just about every word describes something

instead, adjectives modify the meaning of nouns (typically, that is) fun, funner, funnest; Apple’s new funness.

morphological description: comparative and superlative forms

derivational suffixes: -al, -able,- ible, -like, -ful

position of adjs: attributive or predicative

attributive: Det ___ N

exceptions: estates general; attorney general; surgeon general

predicative: Linking v ______ Adv ____

what’s the difference between good and well? well is usually an adv, but it can be an adj
good is usually an adj, but it can also be a n.

feel bad vs. feel badly?
verbs

**semantic:** action/state

**forms:** bare form, 3 pers sg present, pa tense, pres ptcpl, pa participle.

Finite forms of the verb: pa, 3 pers present

nonfinite forms: pres progressive (-ing), ppl (-ed, -en, strong forms), infinitive (to + verb) (C&A call it the “bare” form)

**morphology of verbs:** person, number, tense, aspect, voice, mood

the **bare** form serves as the base for the others

3 person sg present

past tense form

present participle

past participle
verbs: person, number, tense, aspect, voice, mood

verbal suffixes: -ize, -ify

POSITION: Aux ___ _____!
What is tense? English verbs have two tenses: PA, Pres.

there is no formal future tense

ggrammatical vs. chronological tense

examples of tense:

simple present and past  X goes; X went
present progressive  X is going
present perfect  X has gone
present perfect progressive:  X have been going
past perfect  X had gone
past perfect progressive:  X had been going
future  X will go
future perfect  X will have gone
future perfect progressive  X will have been going
**What is Aspect:** whether an action is completed or continuous, ongoing

progressive: an ongoing action

perfective: a discrete or completed action
**What is voice:** describes the relationship of the subject to the action

active: the subject performs an action

passive: the subject has something done to it
What is mood? Defines attitude toward what speaker is saying. Mood allows the speaker to refer to the possible worlds in which the state or event is, the situation, the kinds of truth, certainty, possibility, necessity, that pertain (command, wish, possibility).

Types of mood: indicative, imperative, subjunctive.
types of mood: **indicative, imperative, subjunctive**

**indicative:** this is so; [**interrogative:** Is this so? (authors fold this in with indicative)]
  
  **inflects** for person, number, tense

**imperative:** This must be so.
  
  **inflects:** bare infinitive

**the subjunctive mood:** expresses something wished for, the mood of conditions (if...)
  
  **inflects:** bare infinitive for present; regular past tense except for ‘were’

speaker wants something to be true, but knows it isn’t—*I wish this were easier to explain;*

speaker commands: *Let there be light; let the wild ruckus begin.*

[we often use modals to express conditional meaning]*

**conditional:** If x happens, then this will be so; this could be so; might be; ought to be; should be; would be . . .

  the modal auxiliaries: can/could may/might shall/should will/would ought
  the double modal: might could
  the triple: coulda, shoulda, woulda]
morphology of verbs

the bare form: most verbs use this to form the infinitive and as a base for other forms

exceptions: to be, to go (suppletion: using went as pa. tense of go), to have, to do

strong/weak verbs:
  weak: past tense and past participle in -ed (includes bring/brought, think/thought)
  strong: sing/sang/sung; take/took/taken; swim, swam, swum; drink/drank/drunken

progressive aspect: a continuing action, -ing
perfect aspect: a completed action
sequence of tenses:

- **Past perfect:** I had played
- **Present perfect:** I have played
- **(simple) past:** I played
- **present:** I play,
- **present progressive:** I am playing
- **Future:** I will play
- **Future perfect:** I will have played
- **Future progressive:** I will be playing
- **Past progressive:** I was playing.
- **Present perfect progressive:** I have been playing.
- **Past perfect progressive:** I had been playing.
syntactic position of verbs:

after AUX___
alone in imperatives;
alone after subject   NP _____ ;
between S and O:     NP _______ NP
transitivity of verbs:

whether V. takes one or more objects

intransitive: no obj;  *we sleep*

transitive: a d.o  *we made cookies*

ditransitive: do + i.o.  *we gave Sue the cookies*

the do comes before the i.o.; the io can be represented by a prep phrase

the next two categories require predicatives in their complements:

linking: connect complement to subject:  *we are nice*

object-predicative: connect comp to obj:  *Sue called us nice*
many verbs are more than one type:

some verbs are only trans: prohibit (requires an obj) You can’t say, *He prohibits.
transitive verbs can be made passive
some are only intransitive (come: no obj possible)
most can be either: don’t hit me; the baby hits

ditransitive verbs: give, send, promise, tell, lend. ask, show: d.o vs. beneficiary or recipient:

indirect object usually comes first if there are two NPs in a row or indirect object is expressed by means of a prepositional phrase
verbs requiring, not objects, but complements

linking verbs: be, appear, seem; v + complement (comp modifies subj)

I am the walrus
I am hungry

verb + obj + complement (the complement modifies the obj, not the subj):

He called the teacher a grammar Nazi
She called our friend intolerable

lie: to assume a horizontal position;
lay: to place or set down

the forms often blend, because their meanings are so close:

lie/lay/lain     lay laid laid

sit/set  These, too, may be confused.
What is voice?

active versus passive:

X did the homework; the homework was done by x

anomalous verbs:

*to be*  *am, is, are, was, were, being, been* – where do these different forms come from?

*OE beon, esan, weren*

to go  go/went  (suppletion: another form is used to fill out the paradigm)
**adverbs:** very hard category to define – modify v, adj, adv, and full clauses or sentences (sentence adverbs: *frankly, clearly;* what about *hopefully*)

- express qualities
- typical suffix: *-ly*
- _____ ADJ _____V or VP _____ ADV

**temporal:**  Yesterday, I did my homework
**manner:**  I did the work hastily
**discourse:**

Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn
Hopefully, spring will come soon

**morphology of adverbs:** they don’t all end in *-ly*

some adverbs do not end in *-ly:* go slow / slowly; go fast/*fastly
some adjectives end in *-ly:* friendly, homely

If you can say *I do badly,*
why not: *Why don’t I run fastly?*
closed classes

**prepositions:** typically *preposed* before a noun, and describing or characterizing the reln of that n to another one: location, direction, time, duration, manner, etc.—hard to specify all the relationships

   syntactically, they occur ___ NP

what is the *up* in *call up*: the notion of v + prep as opposed to v + particle (phrasal verbs) – the particle looks like a prep but doesn’t act like one

**conjunctions:** connect things

coordinating: most common are **FANBOY:** *for, and, nor, but, or, yet*

or subordinating: connect a main and a dependent clause—*because, although, when, after, before, unless, if, while, etc.*—they typically create a subordinate clause that functions adverbially (why, when, how, etc)
correlatives: either/or, like coordinators

**complementizers:** create subordinate clauses that function nominally: *that, what, whether, who/whom, where, why, how*
pronouns: stand in for N or NP; relatively closed class, though they behave like nouns

personal pronouns: case and number, and in one case, gender inflections:

indefinites: one, anyone, (you, they, it also used as indefs)

interrogs: wh-

demonstrative: this/that, these/those

relatives: subject of dependent clause.

complementizers: that/which — introduce a clause that serves as object of verb

increased use of reflexives like myself: John, Mary, and myself signed up for the raffle.

hisself, hisownself, theirselves, and other nonstandard forms
**determiners:** introduce NPs: definite/indefinite

quantity: some, many, all

number: one, two, first, second

specifiers: *this*/*that*

*predeterminers* (they come first): *all, both, half*

*central determiners* (in the middle): articles, demonstratives, possessives, interrogatives, relatives, nominal relativess (*whichever*), indefinites (*some, any, no*)

*post determiners* (after):

  - cardinal numbers,
  - ordinals,
  - general ordinals (*another, last, next*).
  - Primary quantifiers: *many, several, few, much*

some determiners also function as pronouns: *some, all, both, many, one, this*
Auxiliary verbs

primary aux: *be, have, do*

modals; double modals (*might could*)
marginal *used to, ought to, dare, need, gonna, hafta, start, had better, have got to*

Auxiliary verbs are either epistemic: what is necessary/possible given known facts

or they are deontic: expressing obligation/permission

He must have overslept (epistemic)
He must sleep now (deontic)
She may be ill/ she may take as many pills as she needs
The storm should be over / Should we call the police?
modals

are sometimes called **defective** because they don’t inflect for third person; no present participle, no ppl inflection, no infinitive

they can contract with negatives; and with subjects: *Mustn’t, I’ll*

They appear before the main verb of the clause

Std E doesn’t have double or triple modals but some varieties do: *might could, hand’t oughta, I’m fixin’ to go; I be working all the time;*

completive *done*: *He done did that.*

Stressed *bin* to indicate remote past: *I done studied. I BIN studied.*

What’s this: *The material will have had to have been being studied.*
challenges to categorization:

–*ing* sometimes inflectional, sometimes derivational;
noun on noun functioning as adjs:

*English class grammar textbook cover*

*yes* and *no*: what are they? Sentence adverbs? *Yes, we have no bananas*

or is it a discourse marker, like *um, well*?

what do such challenges tell us about grammar: all categories leak

OK: what is it?

What is “so” at the start of an utterance? So, that’s a good question . . .?
descriptive syntax and prescriptive rules

*hopefully* as a sentence adverbial meaning, it is to be hoped, as opposed to an adverb:

> He looked up hopefully, but no help was in sight;
> Hopefully they will rescue me soon, he thought

*split infinitive: to boldly go*—

sentence final prepositions – originates in a criticism by Dryden of some Jonson sentences which he thought shouldn’t strand the prep at the end, it later became a proscription.

*that happens often: what begins as a suggestion then becomes a rule:*

*that/which
it’s/its* the apostrophe protection society
*sg. they*