Nouns

A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea. Sometimes nouns are introduced by an article (a, an, or the) but not always. The nouns in the following sentences are italicized:

Variety is the *spice* of *life*.

The squeaky *wheel* gets the *grease*.

A *bird* in the *hand* is worth *two* in the *bush*.

There are types of nouns: proper, common, abstract, concrete, count, noncount, singular, plural, collective, and possessive. These classifications can often overlap.

- **Proper nouns** refer to specific names that need to be capitalized, such as *Eiffel Tower, Joanna*, and *Detroit*.

- **Common nouns** are the opposite of proper nouns and require no capitalization: *monument, woman*, and *city*.

- **Abstract nouns** are those that fall into the category of ideas like *variety, love*, and *haste*.

- **Concrete nouns** are the counterpart to abstract and are literal people, places, or things.

- **Count nouns** are those that require articles (*the glass of water, a pretty girl, the cities*), while noncount nouns do not need articles (*water, oil, freedom*).

- **Singular nouns** involve a single person, place, thing, or idea: *man, dog, emotion, street*.

- **Plural nouns** involve more than one: *men, dogs, emotions, streets*.

- **Collective nouns** are singular nouns that represent multiple people/objects, such as *family, band*, and *class*.

- **Possessive nouns** are those that work as adjectives and need be made possessive: *Clark’s shoe, the dog’s ear, a day’s work*.

This handout is adapted from University of Alabama Writing Center Website. Only the format has been changed.