A noun is a word or group of words that names or identifies a person, place, or thing. A thing can refer to either a tangible object or even something intangible such as a quality, concept, or activity.

The highlighted words in each of the following sentences are examples of nouns.

1. The psychologist was invited to speak at a conference on eating disorders. (person)
2. Our trip included a two-day visit to Prince Edward Island. (place)
3. My desk was cluttered with miscellaneous pieces of junk. (object)
4. Mark was admired for his beauty. (quality)
5. Many people associate romance with candlelit dinners and walks on the beach. (concept)
6. Jennifer thinks snowboarding is dangerous. (activity)

The highlighted words in the following sentences show how nouns perform various functions in a sentence:

1. The employee e-mailed the memo.  
The noun employee functions as the subject of the sentence.
2. The employee e-mailed the memo.  
The noun memo functions as the direct object of the sentence.
3. The employee e-mailed his supervisor the memo.  
The noun supervisor functions as the indirect object of the sentence.
4. The employee e-mailed the memo to his supervisor.  
The noun supervisor functions as the object of the preposition.
5. The employee is a consultant.  
The noun consultant functions as the subject complement.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Nouns can also be classified as either countable or uncountable nouns.

Countable nouns name things or persons that can be counted. They have both singular and plural forms. A plural countable noun must agree with a plural verb in a sentence.

The following sentences use plural countable nouns as subjects:

1. The players were not prepared for the level of skill demonstrated by their opponents.
2. The categories list the most important qualifications.

Uncountable nouns name things or persons that cannot be counted. These words do not have a plural form. They are never used with a or an, and they are used with a third-person singular verb. The following sentences use singular uncountable nouns as subjects:

1. The furniture was moved from the living room to the basement.
2. The confidence of the hikers grows as they near the peak of the mountain.

Some uncountable nouns become countable nouns, depending on their use in different contexts. The following pair of sentences shows how an uncountable noun can become a countable noun (note the change from singular to plural form):
1. Chocolate is my favourite food.
2. Chocolates were left on my pillow.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns name groups of things, animals, or persons. Even though collective nouns may account for the individual parts of the group, collective nouns identify the groups as whole units. Consider the highlighted words in the following sentences:

1. The class leaves the school early every day to go on a field trip.
   The word class is a collective noun because it refers to the group of students as a unit; therefore, it takes a singular verb, leaves.

2. The police have been searching for the murder weapon.
   The word police is a collective noun because it refers to the group of police officers; however, it takes a plural compound verb, have been searching, instead of a singular verb.

Examples of Collective Nouns:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>flock</th>
<th>herd</th>
<th>army</th>
<th>mob</th>
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<td>committee</td>
<td>jury</td>
<td>anthology</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
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<tr>
<td>bouquet</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>gang</td>
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