

1 Here's the Idea

▶ A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

Things: cameras,
vehicle, cheetah

Persons: tourists,
photographers, Chris

Ideas: surprise,
suddenness, happiness

Places: Masai Mara
Game Preserve, Kenya



A **common noun** is a general name for a person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns are usually not capitalized.

A **proper noun** is the name of a particular person, place, thing, or idea. A proper noun is always capitalized.

Common	river, mountain, pilot
Proper	Nile, Mt. Kenya, Charles Lindbergh

A **concrete noun** names an object that can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, or tasted.

An **abstract noun** names an idea, quality, or characteristic.

Concrete	shoe, car, perfume, thorn
Abstract	simplicity, beauty, truth, intention

A noun may be either **singular** or **plural** in form, depending on whether it names a single person, place, thing, or idea or more than one.

Singular	map, berry, deer, mouse
Plural	maps, berries, deer, mice

For more about spelling plural forms, see p. 651.

Every noun is either common or proper, concrete or abstract, and singular or plural. For example, *desert* is common, concrete, and singular. *Great Lakes* is proper, concrete, and plural.

A **collective noun** refers to a group of people or things. Examples include *herd*, *family*, *crew*, *team*, and *staff*. Even when a collective noun is singular in form, it can be used to refer to a group either as a single unit or as a number of individuals.

The herd (unit) runs away as we get close.

The herd (individuals) find hiding places in the brush.

A **compound noun** is formed from two or more words. Some compound nouns are written as single words, some as hyphenated words, and some as separate words.

Compound Nouns

One word	toothbrush, backpack, watermelon
Hyphenated word	self-knowledge, sister-in-law
Separate words	duffel bag, South Carolina, Taj Mahal

A **possessive noun** shows ownership or relationship. Possessive nouns are spelled with apostrophes.

Ownership the tourist's passport

Relationship the tourist's companion