



Notes – Nouns

- I. Identifying Characteristics
 - a. Marked for Plural
 - i. Regular s
 - ii. Some other irregular plural form
 - b. Marked for Genetive
 - i. Possession (*Henry's* hat)
 - ii. Origin (*Sally's* letter)
 - iii. Appositive (city of *Burlington*)
 - iv. Subjective (*John's* arrival)
 - c. Distribution
 - i. Where is the word in the sentence?
 - ii. We'll be saying things like "This looks like a noun but it's in an adjective slot."
 - iii. Words following an article: "The X"
 - iv. Words preceding a verb in the subject position: "X is..."
- II. Inflections
 - a. Countable nouns – some nouns are not always countable ("milk")
 - i. Regular plural = s
 - ii. Can be stated as a rule
 1. Add –s, -z, or –ez sound to make plural
 2. –s after voiceless (larynx not used: cats)
 3. –z after voiced (larynx used: pigs)
 4. –ez after –s, -z words (houses, roses)
 - iii. Irregular Plural Rules
 1. foot, moose, tooth, goose, woman – Change vowel sound to 'ee'
 2. calf, knife, scarf, leaf, wolf, house
 - a. Change final consonants to voiced
 - b. Then follow the general rule.
 3. ox, child
 - a. Add -en
 - b. Not a very good class – too small
 - c. ox sometimes gets regularized to oxes.
 4. fish, sheep, salmon, trout, reindeer
 - a. No change necessary
 - b. Called "zero plural nouns"
 5. Latin
 - a. alumnus, cactus, stimulus, syllabus – replace -us with -i
 - b. curriculum, stadium, auditorium, datum – replace -um with -a
 - c. index, appendix, matrix – replace -ix with -ces
 6. Greek
 - a. thesis, axis, diagnosis, synopsis, oasis – replace with –ees
 - b. criterion, automaton, phenomenon – replace with –a
 - iv. Latin and Greek Rules
 1. See examples above.
 2. We sometimes borrow the plural rule when we borrow the word.
 3. Almost always use the –s, -z, -ez rule instead.
 4. These rules aren't as often used in non-academic settings anyway.
 5. Often proper endings to these rules are a "trigger" for people who know them.
 6. Be careful of over-regulation: octopus and rhinoceros don't follow the latin/greek rules!
 - v. Others
 1. Sometimes –s doesn't mean plural
 2. news, phonetics, United States

3. Some plurals have no singular: tweezers, tongs, minutes (i.e. of a meeting)
- b. Mass Nouns
 - i. Don't take plural
 - ii. Now some are being counted as both
 - iii. snow, hopes, wine, cheese
 - iv. 'much' and 'little' are used with mass nouns.
 - v. 'many' and 'few' are used with countable nouns.
- III. Derivational Endings
 - a. More about these, perhaps, when we do morphology at the end of the semester.
 - b. These either change the meaning or change the part of speech.
 - c. Inflectional endings don't dramatically change the meaning (shoe → shoes, jump → jumped)
 - d. Examples
 - i. -er (farm → farmer)
 - ii. -ness (good → goodness) turns an adjective into a noun
 - iii. -hood (brother → brotherhood)
 - iv. -ship (friend → friendship)
 - v. -ment (argue → argument) turns a verb into a noun
 - vi. -ist (piano → pianist)
 - e. Gender Markings
 - i. Not used as much as in other languages
 - ii. bride / bridegroom
 - iii. waiter / waitress
 - iv. hero / heroine
 - v. widow / widower
 - vi. Notice that the male is usually the "original" word except in the case of 'bride' and 'widow'.
- IV. Proper Nouns
 - a. Specific things
 - b. Capitalized
 - c. These are taught in schools thanks to the attached written rules.
- V. Introducers
 - a. Typical nouns often have introducers
 - b. Articles: a, an, the
 - c. Determiners
 - i. Includes articles
 - ii. Possessive pronouns
 - iii. this, that, some, any (when used to introduce a noun)
 - iv. In the sentence, "That is good," 'that' is not a determiner
 - d. Limiting Adjectives
 - i. Same as determiners, just a less common term.
 - ii. Small class of adjectives
 - iii. In "That new book..." the word 'that' restricts / limits which book is meant.
 - iv. Possessive, demonstrative, numerical, indefinite, interrogative, articles
- VI. Noun Phrases
 - a. The noun "governs" or "determines" the rest of the words in the noun phrase.
 - b. Naturally, the noun is the more important piece.
 - c. Plural nouns, for example, require plural verbs
 - d. The noun generally comes at the end of the phrase it governs in English.
 - e. Person-first-speech is an idea that one should say "the child who stutters" instead of "the stuttering child" on the premise that somehow it gives the noun more importance.
 - f. Examples
 - i. John
 - ii. mail carriers
 - iii. most dogs

- iv. many Americans
- v. a student from Brazil (whole thing is a noun phrase)
- vi. the table in the corner (whole this is a noun phrase, and so are "the table" and "the corner")