

Choices: Exploring Parts of Speech

Here's your chance to step out of the grammar book and into the real world. You may not notice them, but you and the people around you use the parts of speech every day. The following activities challenge you to find a connection between the parts of speech and the world around you. Do the activity below that suits your personality best, and then share your discoveries with your class. Have fun!

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Every Letter Counts

Have a contest to determine who can find the longest proper compound noun. Entries must be verified in a reliable source such as a dictionary, an atlas, or an encyclopedia.

TIME LINE

First and Last

If you've got a first name and a last name, your name is a compound noun. Not everybody has a compound noun for a name, you know. Plato didn't, Aristotle didn't, and lots of other people don't. However, most people do. Make a time line that your class can use throughout the year. Leave room for additions. Then, pick out some of your favorite historical figures and write their names on the appropriate part of the time line. In small letters under each two-word name, write *compound noun*.

AUDITORY

Begin at the End

Have you noticed that nouns often have certain suffixes, such as *-tion*, *-ology*, and *-er*? Identify as many of these suffixes as you can. Then, get together with some friends and use your list of suffixes to make up ten new nouns! Here's a question to get you started: What's a good name for those colorful little erasers shaped like dinosaurs, hearts, and other things?

CHARACTERIZATION

Way Back When

Pick three historical periods (such as the Victorian era, medieval times, Ice Age, or Jazz Age). Choose at least ten adjectives that describe each of those time periods. Post your adjectives in the appropriate places on a time line.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Betty the Boa Constrictor

There's a big difference between saying, "I took an animal with me," and "I took my pet boa constrictor Betty with me." *Animal* is a general noun that could refer to anything from an elephant to a tarantula. Choose a partner. Then, in a page or less, write a description of a day on safari, and use only general nouns. Then, trade papers with your partner, and revise the description so that every noun is a specific noun. Trade again, and compare results.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Las, Les, Der, and The

Why do we need articles, anyway? Do other languages use articles? How does Spanish use articles? German? Japanese? Find out about at least one other language. Interview someone who speaks another language, or conduct a library search. Then, write a one-page essay explaining how another language uses articles and comparing it with English. Read your essay to the class.

VISUAL PRESENTATION

Documentation

Get together with a group of friends or lead the class in a brainstorming session. Your goal is to make a poster listing nouns that name every kind of document that exists. Concentrate especially on documents that you and your friends are most likely to create in the future. Your list should include job application forms, personal letters, business cards, reports, recipes, and directions. Don't limit yourself to print media; try to include documents that can be produced in other media like DVDs, CDs, and electronic media. When you've finished your list, organize it into categories and create a poster to display in class.