ASU Slang

Tips for Identifying Parts of Speech

Words are slippery! We can record (verb) a concert, then play back the record (noun). We can rain (verb) on someone’s parade, or we can dance in the rain (noun).

Nouns

- Nouns are people, places and things.
- Nouns can be preceded by articles and other determiners (the student, a book, some carrots, those monkeys).
- Noun phrases can be replaced by pronouns (several smart engineers = they; all of my friends and I = we).
- Nouns can be modified by adjectives (those noisy coyotes, my comfy shoes).
- Regular nouns become plural by adding -s or -es (camera/cameras, house/houses).
- Common noun endings include -tion (relation), -ism (socialism), -ship (partnership), -ment (abolishment).

Verbs

- Verbs are actions (dance) and states of being (seems).
- Verbs are the only category that show tense (He is seething. They skipped lunch. I will study).
- Verbs sometimes use Auxiliary verbs (also called helping verbs). (I could have slept longer. They had been eating cake. She is trying very hard).
Verb phrases can be modified by adverbs (He ran swiftly/The car cruised smoothly) or prepositional phrases (We hid in the basement/I will finish after the movie).

Adjectives

- Adjectives modify nouns and noun phrases (the chonky puppy).
- Most often, adjectives appear before noun phrases (the brilliant scientist, the uncomfortable situation).
- Adjectives also work on the other side of the verb from the noun they modify, especially with verbs that convey state of being (He feels upset/She seems unaware/ The kids are happy).
- Some adjectives end in -ive (pensive) –able/-ible (understandable), -ive (creative), -ic (sarcastic).

Adverbs

- Adverbs can modify verbs and verb phrases (He ran slowly) or else the entire sentence (Optimistically, he checked his bank balance).
- Adverbs also convey degree (The puppies were incredibly hungry; we are quite ready).
- The most common adverb ending is -ly, but not all -ly words are adverbs (He read voraciously; The goats screamed impatiently for food).
- Adverbs can often move to different places in a sentence (They talked quickly/They quickly talked/Quickly, they talked).
- Adverbs are the sneakiest category. If you have no clue, it might be an adverb.

Exclamations

- If the utterance is one word or it all works as one unit of meaning, you might have an utterance (No cap!/Ight).