Nouns

The most common of all words in English is the noun. There are several way to determine whether or not a word is a noun. The general definition of a noun is “the name of a person, place or thing.” It can also be a general idea, a quality or an event. Another way to tell if a word is a noun is to see if one of the three articles “a”, “an” or “the” can be used before the word.

Example: Mount Baker is a thing of beauty.
If you were not sure whether beauty is a noun, use it with an article in front of it:

The beauty of the river is amazing.
He caught a beauty.

Nouns are usually put into two categories, the proper noun and the common noun.

A proper noun is the name we give to a particular person, place, thing, time or organization. Proper nouns always begin with capital letters. Your name is a proper noun. “Vancouver” and “Seattle” are proper nouns. So are “Thursday” and “United Nations”. Many people are confused as to whether or not a noun should have a capital letter. The best rule to follow is: If the noun is a particular person, place, thing, event or organization, then it should be capitalized. Nouns that are not proper nouns are common nouns. They refer to people, places and things in general.

Examples: We stayed in the city at a lovely hotel in the summer.
The underlined words are common nouns. They are not capitalized because they do not refer to a particular city, hotel or time.

We stayed in Tokyo at the Hilton Hotel in August.
The underlined words are proper nouns. They are capitalized because they refer to a particular city, hotel and month.

EXERCISES:

A. Underline the nouns in the list. Don’t guess. Use articles to test the words.

Example:

student learn

tree sugar beautiful air love
free beer flight boyfriend winter
sexy town steam remove golden
B. Underline the **common nouns** in these sentences.

**Example:**
I forgot to turn the **page** in my **calendar** at the **beginning** of March.

1) The largest door in the house was on the top floor.
2) Many bears wander through the forest near lakes.
3) The young boy was tired after the hike up the mountain.
4) Two men and three women drove by in a new car.
5) The people began to assemble on the street because the parade was ready with floats, bands and clowns.
6) A fire started in the rear of the building but soon spread to nearby houses and garages.
7) The old lady watches the same television shows every day.

C. Rewrite these sentences, making sure to capitalize all the **proper nouns**.

**Example:**
The **Olympics** came to **Vancouver** in **February**.

1) When john and elsie’s family went on holiday for christmas, they went to france and germany.

2) There was an earthquake in **San Francisco** in 1906.

3) If henry goes to the hockey game, then terry will stay home.

4) The **Canucks** are playing the **Oilers**, so it should be a good game.

5) My **Cadillac** never fits in the parking spaces in front of the post office on **Davie** street.