

## Lesson 1.2: Noun Morphology

Lesson 1.1 serves to introduce the idea that we make use of certain morphological and syntactic rules/tools to categorize words. This morphological information—the different parts they can have, the ways we put those parts together, and the information those different parts convey—is part of what we use to identify a word as a noun. So here’s what we know:

**Nouns can be pluralized** – One morphological fact about most nouns (see more about the “most” part here) is that they express number, they can be singular or plural. (Some languages have a different form for “dual,” which is pretty cool.) We usually pluralize an English noun by adding *-s/-es/-ies* in the written form: *rats, spiders, bunnies*. So if you take your word in question and pluralizing it works, you got yourself a noun.

**Nouns can be made possessive** – Another morphological fact about nouns is that they can take the possessive suffix *-s*. Try attaching the possessive to some words that you know aren’t nouns – they’re terrible. Or it turns that word into a noun. (I follow the linguistic tradition of using \* to mark an ungrammatical example.)

\*the happy’s hat

\*a curious’s question

but

the cat’s tail

the truth’s inevitability

Nouns can have certain other “nominal” suffixes – *-ance/ence (performance)*, *-ion (formation)*, *-al (refusal)*, *-age (leakage)*. To find some more of these, try the following activity:

**Activity:** Have students come up with words that are created by adding the noun-making suffixes. There’s a table accompanying this lesson with some examples. You’ll see that the suffixes will consistently attach to the same part of speech, which is cool too. (Students might notice that some of the suffixes in the table attach to nouns to derive other nouns rather than words of another category.)

What’s the point of this? To show that we all already know what nouns are and how to manipulate them morphologically, by adding the appropriate suffixes. And you get for free some good morphological analysis as words are put together and taken apart.