

NOUN PHRASE

In our article “Noun modifiers can modify slightly far away nouns”, we say that the noun modifiers if preceded by a noun phrase can modify the head of the noun phrase. Through this article we will understand what these noun phrases and noun modifiers are so that we can quickly identify them and ascertain their roles in modification.

So let’s first begin with [noun phrases](#). Now even before we start with noun phrase, let us quickly take a look at the definition of [noun](#).

NOUN – A noun is word used to show a place, a person, a thing, or an idea (abstract noun).

Now let’s understand what a noun phrase is.

NOUN PHRASE - A **noun phrase** is a **group of words** that **consists of a noun and a modifier** that modifies that noun. Study the table for examples:

EXAMPLE	NOUN	NOUN MODIFIER
a striped cat	cat	a striped
the engine of the car	the engine	of the car
Jimmy’s kitchen	kitchen	Jimmy’s

STRUCTURE OF NOUN PHRASE

In the above three examples, we see that the first and the second examples starts with a modifier first followed by the noun, whereas the second example starts with the noun followed by a modifier. So, in a noun phrase, the modifier can be placed either after or before the noun it refers to. A noun phrase can start with either a noun or a noun modifier.

Following are the types of **modifiers that come before the noun** to make a noun phrase:

Type	Example	Explanation
Articles	a cat, the engine	While in “a cat”, “a” refers to just any cat, in “the engine”, “the” refers to particular engine.
Possessive Nouns	Jimmy’s kitchen	“Jimmy’s” is the noun in possessive case. It acts an adjective that modifies the noun “kitchen”.
Possessive Pronouns	our cat, his car	“our” & “his” are possessive pronouns that refer to “cat” and “car” respectively.
Adjectives	a striped cat, a flowering plant	“striped” and “flowering” are adjectives. They modify “cat” and “plant” respectively. Both the modifiers give information about the nouns they modify.

Following are the examples of **the modifiers that come after the noun** in a noun phrase:

Types	Examples	Explanation
Prepositional phrases	- the engine of the car - the man behind the fence	“of the car” start with “of” & hence is a prepositional phrase. It gives information about the noun “the engine” - Prepositional phrase “behind the fence” gives information about “the man”, a noun.
Relative pronoun clause	- the cat that has stripes - the author who wrote the book	- Although “that has stripes” is a clause, together with “cat”, the whole entity is a noun phrase. - The relative clause starting with “who” and “the author” together make a noun phrase.
Verb-ing modifiers	- the cat sitting on the table - the guests staying in room 205	- Verb-ing modifier “sitting...” is giving information about the noun “the cat”. “staying...” is giving information about “the guests”.
Verb-ed modifiers	- the book kept on the upper shelf - the car driven by a chauffeur in uniform	- Verb-ed modifier “kept...” is giving information about the noun “the book”. “driven...” is giving information about “the car”.

In rare occasions, we do see a **noun phrase that starts with a pronoun and is followed by a modifier modifying that pronoun**:

Example	Pronoun	Modifier
1. We who were famished by then were still stuck in the jungle.	We	who were famished by then
2. Someone very important has asked me to deliver this to you.	Someone	Very important
3. There is no one intelligent enough to understand the forces of nature.	No one	Intelligent enough

NOUN MODIFIERS

Now that we know about the noun phrases, we must also know about what all can classify as noun modifiers that can modify a noun phrase, to be more precise the head of the noun phrase.

As the name suggests, noun modifiers are the modifiers that modify noun entities. These noun entities can be a one-word noun or a noun phrase. Since noun modifiers modify noun entities, they must be placed as close to the entity that they modify as possible to keep the meaning of the sentence logical and clear.

Following are the **kinds of noun modifiers**:

Types	Example	Modifier	Noun entity
Adjectives	The striped cat jumped out of the window.	striped	cat
Verb-ing modifiers	The planets circling the sun form the solar system.	circling the sun	The planets
Verb-ed modifiers	The book kept on the table belongs to my sister.	kept on the table	The book
Prepositional phrases	The engine of the car died down midway	of the car	The engine
Relative Pronoun Modifiers	The man who is standing behind the fence is my trainer.	who is standing behind the fence	The man

For an example of verb-ing modifier, refer to the OG examples GMAT Prep example 3 in the article “Noun modifiers can modify slightly far away nouns”.