THE NOUN PHRASE

Recognize a noun phrase when you find one.

A noun phrase includes a noun—a person, place, or thing—and the modifiers that distinguish it.

You can find the noun dog in a sentence, for example, but you do not know which canine the writer means until you consider the entire noun phrase: that dog, Aunt Audrey's dog, the dog on the sofa, the neighbor's dog that chases our cat, the dog digging in the new flower bed.

Modifiers can come before or after the noun. Ones that come before might include articles, possessive nouns, possessive pronouns, adjectives, and/or participles.

**Articles:** a dog, the dog

**Possessive nouns:** Aunt Audrey's dog, the neighbor's dog, the police officer's dog

**Possessive pronouns:** our dog, her dog, their dog

**Adjectives:** that dog, the big dog, the spotted dog

**Participles:** the drooling dog, the barking dog, the well-trained dog

Modifiers that come after the noun might include prepositional phrases, adjective clauses, participle phrases, and/or infinitives.

**Prepositional phrases:** a dog on the loose, the dog in the front seat, the dog behind the fence

**Adjective clauses:** the dog that chases cats, the dog that appears lost, the dog that won the agility championship

**Participle phrases:** the dog whining for a treat, the dog clipped at the grooming salon, the dog walked daily

**Infinitives:** the dog to catch, the dog to train, the dog to adopt
Less frequently, a noun phrase will have a **pronoun** as its base—a word like *we, everybody*, etc.—and the modifiers that distinguish it.

Read these examples:

*We who were green with envy*

_We_ = subject pronoun; _who were green with envy_ = modifier.

_Someone spoiling for a fight_

_Someone_ = indefinite pronoun; _spoiling for a fight_ = modifier.

_No one important_

_No one_ = indefinite pronoun; _important_ = modifier.