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.