

Language – common and proper nouns

Reading/discussion

You know that nouns are naming words. They tell us the names of people, places and things. But did you know that there are both **common nouns and proper nouns**? Common nouns are the names of everyday things, like dog, man, shop, town, and country. Proper nouns are the names of **specific** names, ideas and things, like Fido, David, Sears, Washington and America. So the names of people, pets, companies, towns and countries are all proper nouns. So are the names of the days and months, religious festivals, holidays, books, awards, historical events, monuments and brand names.

Did you notice that all the proper nouns started with a **capital letter**? There is another major difference between common and proper nouns. Most proper nouns don't follow an **article**, such as 'a, an, the', nor do they have any other limiting **modifier**, such as 'any' or 'some'. However, there are some exceptions to this rule:

Sometimes proper nouns are preceded by the article 'the'. For instance, we say "The United States of America". This is usually the case when the word 'of' is part of the name. Here are some other rules for using 'the' before a proper noun":

- When the name of a place is **plural**. For example: the Bahamas;
- When we are writing about a **region**. For example: the North Pole;
- When we are writing about **organizations**. For example: the Round Table;
- When the name of a place includes certain **geographical** words. For example: the Atlantic Ocean (this rule can be tricky because geographical words such as ocean, sea, gulf, river and desert use 'the' but others, like island, park and hill usually don't).

Name _____

Date _____

Activities:

A. Change common nouns to proper nouns.

Here is a paragraph containing only common nouns. Rewrite it, changing at least 5 common nouns into proper nouns. For example, instead of 'the girl' you could write 'Mary':

Although it was a weekday, it was also a holiday, so when the boy woke up he quickly called his dog and they both went down to the river which flowed close to the town to spend the day fishing.

B. Categories of proper nouns.

Hang 6 sheets of chart paper in different places around the classroom. Write one of these categories on the top of each sheet: People; Months and Days; Places; Books; Holidays and Brand names. Write one example on each sheet. Remind the children to use the article 'the' where appropriate. Now give the children 5 minutes to walk around the room and each fill in one proper noun in each category.

When everyone has had a turn, read through and correct where necessary and ask if there are any more examples before finishing the activity.

Name _____

Date _____

Answer Sheet

Activity A

This is an example of a completed paragraph. Naturally the names and places could be very different. Make sure that capital letters are used and that 'the' is correctly used where necessary.

Although it was **Tuesday**, it was also **Thanksgiving**, so when **Peter** woke up he quickly called **Rover** and they both went down to **the Sun River** which flowed close to **Fairfield** to spend the day fishing.

Activity B

Except for Months and Days and Holidays, there are too many possibilities to give examples. Ensure that all the suggestions are proper nouns, capitalized and that the article 'the' is used appropriately.