Adjectives as Nouns

Using adjectives as nouns is a common grammatical construction in English. This feature allows speakers to use adjectives to represent **groups of people**, **things**, or **concepts**, often in a more general or abstract way.

Usage and Examples

Group Characteristics:
Adjectives are often used as nouns to refer to groups of people with a shared characteristic.

- **Example:** "The rich" refers to "rich people" in general, and "the poor" refers to "poor people."

Abstract Qualities:
Sometimes, adjectives are used as nouns to represent an abstract idea or quality.

- **Example:** "The good must outweigh the bad," where "good" and "bad" stand for good things and bad things, respectively.

Colors as Nouns:
Color adjectives can be used as nouns to refer to things of that color.

- **Example:** "The blues and greens of the painting were soothing," where "blues" and "greens" refer to elements of those colors in the painting.

Nationalities and Demographics:
Adjectives describing nationalities or demographics can be used as nouns.

- **Example:** "The Japanese are known for their cuisine," where "Japanese" refers to Japanese people.

Grammatical Features

Plural Form: Adjectives used as nouns often take a plural verb form, especially when they refer to a collective or a group, even though the adjective itself doesn't change in form. For example, in "**the blind**," the word "blind" can refer to one blind person or blind people in general, with the context clarifying the meaning.

No Possessive Form: When adjectives are used as nouns, they don't typically have a possessive form. To express possession, an of-phrase is used, such as "**the rights** of the disabled."

Lack of Singular/Plural Distinction: The adjective-as-noun often remains unchanged in form whether it is singular or plural. Context and accompanying verbs indicate the number.

This grammatical feature highlights the ability to convey broader meanings and group identities through a single descriptive word, showcasing the flexibility and dynamism of English language usage.



Adjectives as Nouns Exercise 1:

Choose the correct answer.

1. How can you identify an adjective being used as a noun in a sentence?
a) It is followed by a adverb
b) It is capitalized
c) It comes with a definite article

2. Identify the sentence where an adjective is used as a noun to describe a specific group.
a) The book was extremely interesting.
b) The young are often more adventurous.
c) He drives a very powerful car.

3. In which sentence is an adjective used as a noun in the plural form?
a) The blacks and whites of the photo contrast sharply.
b) The flowers are very colorful.
c) He quickly read the document.

4. Which sentence uses an adjective as a noun to indicate a group?
a) The sky is very blue.
b) The book was interesting.
c) The old need care and respect.

5. Which sentence features an adjective as a noun?
a) The car is fast.
b) The reds in the painting are vibrant.
c) She laughed loudly.

6. What does an adjective-noun typically refer to?
a) An action or verb
b) A group or category of people
c) A particular place

7. In what context is an adjective used as a noun to describe a collective group?
a) To express an action
b) To name a specific object
c) To refer to people or things with a common attribute

8. Which sentence uses an adjective as a noun to represent a concept?
a) The good outweighs the bad.
b) She is a good person.
c) That sounds good.

9. When using an adjective as a noun, what is often implied?
a) Time
b) Quantity
c) Category

10. In which sentence is an adjective used as a noun?
a) The children are noisy.
b) The wounded were helped.
c) The grass is green.

Adjectives as Nouns Exercise 2:

Complete the gaps with the correct adjective nouns

1. The _____ often face discrimination in many societies.
a) fortunate
b) marginalised
c) tall

2. In the art world, the _____ are celebrated for their creativity and originality.
a) innovative
b) blue
c) rich

3. The _____ tend to live longer, healthier lives according to the study.
a) active
b) lazy
c) wealthy

4. During the emergency, the _____ were the first to receive aid.
a) strong
b) affected
c) happy

5. The _____ are often the target of envy and criticism.
a) powerful
b) sad
c) old

6. The _____ have a responsibility to share their knowledge with the _____.
a) experienced / beginners
b) big / small
c) loud / quiet

7. The _____ are more likely to take risks and try new things.
a) slow
b) old
c) young

8. In the market, the _____ usually dictate the trends.
a) wealthy
b) seller
c) influential

9. The _____ often have access to exclusive educational programs.
a) intelligent
b) workers
c) privileged

10. In times of economic downturn, the _____ are hit the hardest.
a) rich
b) vulnerable
c) businesses

Adjectives as nouns: answer key

Grammar practice · B2 Upper-intermediate

Where two or more answers are given, any of them is correct.

Exercise 1

1. c) It comes with a definite article
2. b) The young are often more adventurous.
3. a) The blacks and whites of the photo contrast sharply.
4. c) The old need care and respect.
5. b) The reds in the painting are vibrant.
6. b) A group or category of people
7. c) To refer to people or things with a common attribute
8. a) The good outweighs the bad.
9. c) Category
10. b) The wounded were helped.

Exercise 2

1. b) marginalised
2. a) innovative
3. a) active
4. b) affected
5. a) powerful
6. a) experienced / beginners
7. c) young
8. c) influential
9. c) privileged
10. b) vulnerable

Corrections to the printed pages

Explanation: the blind means blind people in general, not one blind person.