



Noun groups and their use

We use language to talk about people and things. The words we choose are arranged into groups, either around a noun or a verb. They are called noun groups or verb groups.

- **Noun groups** tell us which people or things are being talked about.
- **Verb groups** tell us what is being said about the people or things.

Noun Group

- You can use a noun group to refer to someone or something by naming them.
- You do this by using a general name called a **noun** or **common noun**.

Example

Common
noun

Women tend not to have much money as men.

- You can also use a specific name, called a **proper noun**.
- Proper nouns are mainly used for people, places, and events.

Example

Proper noun

Mary likes strawberries.

Determiners with Common Nouns

- A **common noun** is used when a person or thing you are referring to **belongs in a set with others** that are similar in some way.
 - If you just want to say that the person or thing is in that set, you use a **general determiner**.

Example

General determiner

General determiner

I met **a** girl who was **a** student there.
Have you got **any** comment to make about that?

General determiner



- If you want to show which member of a set you are talking about, you use a **specific determiner** with a common noun.

Example

I put **my** arm round **her** shoulders.
She came to see me **this** morning.

Specific pronoun

Specific pronoun

Specific pronoun

Personal and Demonstrative Pronouns

- A pronoun can be used if you decide not to name the person or thing.
- You do this because the person or thing has already been named.

Example

Could **I** speak to Sue, please? I am sorry, **she** does not work here now.

Personal pronoun

'She' is used here to replace the name of the person (Sue)

Example

I have got two boys and looking at **them** I can see a little bit of myself.

Demonstrative pronoun

Indefinite Pronouns

- You may decide not to name the person or thing at all because:
 - you do not want to
 - you think it is not important
 - you do not know
 - you want to be vague or mysterious



- In such cases you use an **indefinite pronoun** which does not refer to any particular person or thing.

Example

I had to say **something**.

In this country **nobody** trusts **anyone**.

The diagram consists of a light purple rectangular box containing the example text. Three callout boxes, each labeled 'Indefinite pronoun', are connected to the text by lines. One callout points to the word 'something' in the first sentence. Two callouts point to the words 'nobody' and 'anyone' in the second sentence.

References

Adapted from Sinclair, J (ed.) 1994, *Collins COBUILD English grammar*, Harpers Collins Publishers, London.