

Grammar and vocabulary

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- Complex noun phrases
- Countable and uncountable nouns
- Adjectives meaning *large* or *important*
- Prefixes

1 Complex noun phrases

Academic texts contain many examples of complex noun phrases. Often these take the form of a noun followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with *of*. Compare the following two sentences, where the second one uses a complex noun phrase with *of* to express the idea more efficiently.

Hansen (2008) focuses on the way in which second-language pronunciation is acquired.

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Notice how the structure of the sentence changes.

- The verb becomes a noun:
is acquired → the acquisition of
- Some words are now not necessary:
the way in which

1.1 Rewrite the underlined parts of the following sentences using a noun phrase with *of*. Find the main verb in the underlined part of each sentence and replace it with a related noun. Make any other changes necessary.

- It has been argued that if wealth is distributed unequally, this can cause social unrest in any country (Johnson, 2010).
the unequal distribution of wealth
- The next section will consider the ways in which foreign languages are assessed in schools.
- Water supplies can be contaminated, and this can lead to serious disease outbreaks weeks after the cyclone.
- If a woman consumes alcohol during pregnancy, this can affect the developing baby.
- It has been found that a positive emotional state can reduce the pain that someone experiences.
- When it was announced that the top rate of tax would increase to 80 percent, this led to multinational companies moving their offices out of the country.



Study tip When you record a new verb, make sure you also make a note of any related nouns

e.g. distribute (v), distribution (n). This will help you when you try to write complex noun phrases. (See also Unit 1, G&V 2.3, p 24.)

1.2 Look at a piece of writing that you have done recently. Can you find any places where you could express yourself more efficiently using a noun phrase with *of*?

2 Countable and uncountable nouns



Study tip Some nouns can be used either countably or uncountably. A good dictionary will tell you if a word can be used in both ways. When you come across a new noun, make a note of whether it is countable, uncountable, or both, and indicate this in your notes.

e.g. requirement (C), research (U), analysis (C/U)

2.1 a In pairs, write the following nouns in the correct column in the table. Use a dictionary to check your answers.

coincidence consequence damage decrease
disease erosion evidence margin occurrence
phenomenon transport weight

| countable | uncountable | countable and uncountable |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <i>coincidence</i> | | |
| | | |

b The words that you have written in the third column come from the text in 2.1 on pages 27–28. Are they used countably or uncountably in that text?

① As research is an uncountable noun, it is only very rarely used as a plural and does not follow a number, or a quantifier used with countable nouns. For example:

- a recent piece of research NOT a recent research
- two research studies NOT two researches
- much research NOT many researches

3 Adjectives meaning large or important

🔍 Research shows that the following nouns occur frequently after the adjectives considerable, serious, significant, and substantial.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|
| considerable | amount | significant | reduction |
| | attention | | effect |
| | number | | increase |
| | interest | | change |
| serious | consideration | substantial | number |
| | implications | | amount |
| | consequences | | increase |
| | challenge | | part |

3.1 Write four sentences related to your subject using the adjective + noun combinations in the corpus research box. For example (from Business Studies):

- In the past few years there has been **considerable interest** in Total Quality Management (TQM).
- Recruitment of CEOs can present a **serious challenge** to large firms.
- A reduction in labour costs can lead to a **significant increase** in a company's profits.
- Improvements in IT can save a company **substantial amounts** of money.

4 Prefixes

4.1 a Match the prefixes (1–10), which are commonly used in academic vocabulary, to the definitions (a–j).

| | | | |
|----|--------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | sub- | e.g. subheading, subsonic | <u> e </u> |
| 2 | intra- | e.g. intrafamily, intracompany | <u> </u> |
| 3 | pro- | e.g. pro-American, pro-life | <u> </u> |
| 4 | post- | e.g. postgraduate, post-industrial | <u> </u> |
| 5 | under- | e.g. underfunded, underrate | <u> </u> |
| 6 | super- | e.g. super-virus, superabundance | <u> </u> |
| 7 | extra- | e.g. extra-tropical, extraordinary | <u> </u> |
| 8 | anti- | e.g. anti-racist, anticlockwise | <u> </u> |
| 9 | pre- | e.g. prerequisite, prerecord | <u> </u> |
| 10 | over- | e.g. over-ambitious, overheat | <u> </u> |

- before
- too much / more than / on / above / on top of
- within / into
- supporting / approving
- under / below / less important / smaller part
- more than usual / over / above
- after / later than
- not enough / below / less important
- opposed to / against / opposite of / preventing
- outside / in addition to / beyond

b Find pairs of prefixes with opposite meanings, e.g. over/under.

4.2 a Read the definitions and complete the words using the prefixes (1–10) in 4.1.

- pro -European
(adj) in favour of European unification
- pay
(v) to pay someone too little for their work
- section
(n) one of the smaller parts into which a text is divided
- terrestrial
(adj) outside of planet Earth
- operative
(adj) the time after a medical operation

b Read the definitions and add word endings to the following prefixes.

- over
(v) to extend beyond a safe or reasonable limit
- intra
(adj) within the same culture
- pre
(v) to have existed before another thing
- super
(n) a country with great political and military strength
- anti
(n) a medicine that can kill harmful bacteria

🎓 **Focus on your subject** Can you find terms commonly used in your own subject that use these prefixes? If you are unsure of their meaning, check them in a dictionary or (if available) an online glossary.