



How to Use Adjectives As Nouns



A Helpful Guide

How Adjectives become Nouns

A common way we use adjectives as nouns in natural English conversation is to talk about groups.

A group is a collection of many people or things that can all be described with the same adjective. For example:

- Mother Theresa did a lot to help **the poor** in Kolkata, India.

The adjective **poor** means – having very little money; not having enough money for basic needs

[poor adjective - OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](http://poor.adjective-OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com)

The poor means the group or collection of poor people that live in Kolkata, India.

Adjectives used to describe a group of people or things will follow the article **the**.

the rich, the poor
the strong, the weak
the old, the young

the brave
the willing
the gifted

Examples

- Rugby is fun but it's a game for **the young**. I played in high school but I'm too old now.

The young is talking about young people as a group.

- The new rollercoaster at Power Amusement Park has 3 loops! Only **the brave** can ride it!

The brave means the collection of people who are brave.

The adjective **brave** means – (of a person) willing to do things that are difficult, dangerous or painful; not afraid

[brave adjective - OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](#)

- I believe **the strong** should protect **the weak**.

The group of people we think of as strong should help the group of people we think of as weak.

- I joined a tour group that will climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa this summer. The tour website said this is a dream trip for **the adventurous**.

The English suffix ~OUS is added to the end of nouns and verbs to change them into adjectives. (Like **adventurous**) Learn it *HERE* and easily increase your vocabulary.

Worksheet and **infographic**. > Worldenglishblog.com/english-suffix-ous/

- Oliver's son is very smart. He goes to a private school for **the gifted**.

The school is special. It only accepts children who are very smart.

The adjective **gifted** means – having a lot of natural ability or intelligence

[gifted adjective - OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](#)

- The new shopping mall has lots of parking for **the disabled**.

People who are unable to use a part of their body completely or easily because of a physical condition, an illness, an injury, etc. can park easily at the shopping mall.

[disabled adjective -OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](#)

- As the population gets older we need more people to work in centers that care for **the elderly**.

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The elderly means the collection of older people in our society.

[elderly adjective - OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](#)

Expression – Faint Of Heart

If someone is faint of heart they are lacking the courage to face something difficult or dangerous – usually used in the phrase not for the faint of heart

[Faint of heart Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

This expression can also be called an **adjective expression**. The idiom is used to describe a noun, a person. (This is the same job as an adjective.)

The phrase listed above is common – **not for the faint of heart** – We can see that “**the**” is making our adjective expression into a noun that means: *the group of people who are not brave.*

A: Did you watch the new horror movie last night? I heard it’s scary.

B: It’s very scary! I recommend that you don’t watch it by yourself. That movie is **not for the faint of heart!**

Adjectives by themselves – no THE

Here is an example of an adjective that becomes a noun without following the.

- How does your city government help its **homeless**?

Homeless is a noun in this sentence talking about the collection of people who live on the street in my city.

We learned that these adjectives as nouns talk about groups of people or things. Group is a singular countable noun. Singular countable nouns can’t be used by themselves.

- I bought shirt yesterday. ❌

Shirt is also a singular countable noun so it needs to follow an article or a possessive form. [My, yours, his, hers, theirs, Jenny’s]

- I bought **a** shirt yesterday. ✓
- I bought **the** shirt I told you about. ✓
- **My** shirt cost \$29. ✓

When our noun means “A GROUP” it follows the same rule as all singular countable nouns.

The new noun will usually follow the article **THE**, but it will sometimes follow a possessive form. (Like in our example sentence.)

- How does your city government help **its** homeless?

In this sentence, the group of homeless belongs to or is connected with a city. This is a common use, especially in news headlines.

The country just announced its spending \$800,000.00 to support **its unemployed**.

Singular Adjectives as Nouns – Not groups of people or things

Sometimes we will use an adjective as a singular noun that is not part of a bigger group. There are not many examples of this grammar that we use in conversation but I sometimes hear “**the accused**” used in TV shows. Especially shows with police and lawyers. **The accused** means a person who is on trial for committing a crime. This one person, not a group of people.

- After a long trial, **the accused** was found innocent.

This pattern might be used if they don’t want to reveal the person’s real name.

I might also hear “**the deceased**” on the same TV shows. The adjective deceased means dead. We might hear it used like this:

- Police found **the deceased** at 11:30 PM on Friday evening.

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In this case, the people describing the situation do not know who the dead person is yet.

Adjectives as Nouns – MOVIES & TV

Dead is an adjective that is often used as a noun to mean zombies. You can find this grammar in many popular zombie films and TV shows.

Movies like George A. Romero’s “Dawn of **the Dead**,” “Day of **the Dead**,” and “Land of **the Dead**.” These are all movies about zombies coming back from the grave. [George A. Romero – IMDb](#)

“The Walking Dead” is another very popular TV show about zombies. Dead is a noun in this TV show title, walking is an adjective. A group of people are dead and walking! Oh No!

Adjectives can become Nouns by adding Suffixes

Adjectives can also become nouns by adding certain suffixes. For example...

The adjective “intelligent” becomes the noun “intelligence” by adding the suffix -ence.

The adjective “happy” becomes the noun “happiness” by adding the suffix -ness.

You can do a deep dive into the suffix -ness at my blog post here >> [How to Use the Suffix -NESS \(Real examples, Free PDF download and Video\)](#)

