

# REVIEW OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

## Background Information

A **vowel** is a speech sound made by allowing breath to flow out of the mouth, without closing any part of the mouth or throat (although the lips may move to create the correct sound, as in creating the sound “o”). Letters of the English alphabet that represent vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y.

A **consonant** is a speech sound made by partially or completely blocking the flow of air through the mouth (using the lips, teeth, tongue, and palate). Letters of the English alphabet that represent consonants include all the letters that are not vowels. Examples: b, d, k, s.

The letter “y” makes a consonant sound when it appears at the beginning of words (examples: yellow, yacht), and it makes a vowel sound when it appears at the end of words (examples: valley, fairy). This dual role explains why the letter y is considered as only sometimes a vowel.

Once students know that vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y, and that consonants make up all the other letters, they can usually easily group the letters of the alphabet into vowels and consonants. However, there are vowels and consonants that sound like each other in certain words in English. Students speaking or hearing these vowels and consonants can

sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between them, and that makes these vowels and consonants especially challenging as well as interesting. Here are some examples:

- What happens when what looks like a vowel does not sound like a vowel? For example, the u in “unicorn” makes a consonant sound and is usually preceded by “a,” not “an,” in the English language — people say “a unicorn,” not “an unicorn.” An even more interesting example is the word “ununium” (an artificially produced radioactive element, pronounced yoon-yoon-yoo-nee-um, with the accent on the “yoo”). In addition, the o in “one,” “ouananiche” (a type of landlocked salmon, pronounced wan-an-ish, with the emphasis on the “ish”), and “Ouija” (a trademark for a spiritual and telepathic game board, pronounced wee-jee, with the emphasis on the “wee”), makes a consonant sound. The “w” sound in ouananiche and Ouija is actually made by the combination of the letters o and u.
- What happens when what looks like a consonant does not sound like a consonant? For example, the h in “hour” is silent, so the word “hour” begins with a vowel sound and is usually preceded by “an,” not “a,” in the English language — people say “an hour,” not “a hour.” Other examples: honorary, honesty.

## ACTIVITY 1

# Reviewing Vowels and Consonants

## Purpose

To review vowels and consonants.

## Material

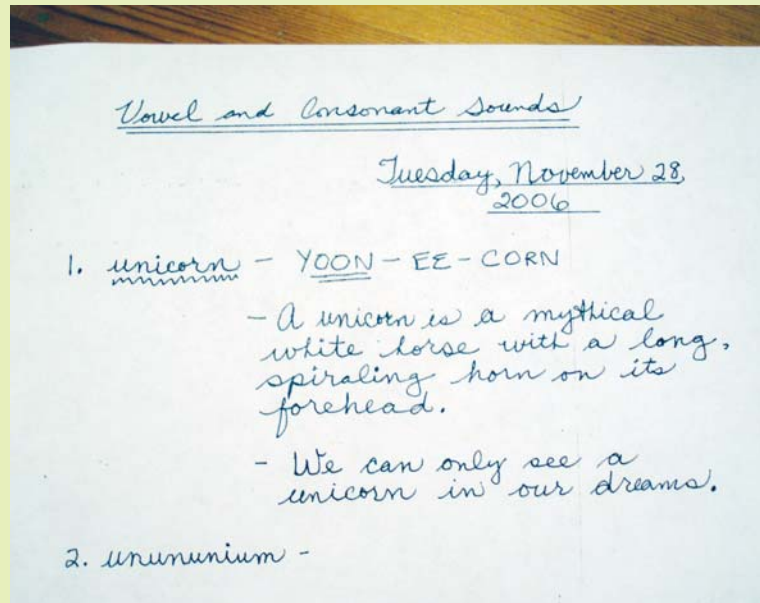
Whiteboard and marker.

Dictionary.

Language Arts journals and pencils.

## Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 4 and review in Year 5.
- Announce that the students will have the opportunity to discover interesting vowels and consonants that do not act like vowels and consonants.
- Briefly review what is meant by vowels and consonants, asking the students to provide examples of each.
- Explain that there are words that look like they start with a vowel but sound like they start with a consonant sound and words that look like they start with a consonant but sound like they start with a vowel.
- Write four words on the whiteboard: unicorn, ununinium, ouananiche, and Ouija. Demonstrate the dictionary, and invite the students to look up each word to find its pronunciation. As the students find each word, ask them to read it



aloud. Together, practice pronouncing these words correctly.

- Explain that these words are examples of what happens when what looks like a vowel does not sound like a vowel. Point out that when words like these make a consonant sound, they are usually preceded by “a,” not “an,” in the English language — for example, someone says, “I wish I had seen a unicorn,” not “I wish I had seen an unicorn.”
- Invite the students to use each of the words in a sentence, each word preceded by “a.”
- Write three more words on the whiteboard: hour, honorary, and honesty. Demonstrate the dictionary, and invite the students to look up each word to find its pronunciation. After the students find

each word, ask them to read it aloud. Together, practice pronouncing these words correctly.

- Explain that although this does not happen often in the English language, these words are examples of what happens when what looks like a consonant does not sound like a consonant. Point out that when words like these make a vowel sound, they are usually preceded by “an,” not “a,” in the English language — for example, someone says, “I will be there in an hour,” not “I will be there in a hour.”
- Invite the students to use each of the words in a sentence, each word preceded by “an.”
- Write four more words on the whiteboard: yellow, yacht, valley, dairy. Explain that the letter “y” makes a consonant sound when it appears at the beginning of words (yellow, yacht), and it makes a vowel sound when it appears at the end of words (valley, dairy).
- Point out that this dual role explains why the letter “y” is considered as only “sometimes” a vowel. Invite the students to suggest several other words that start or end with “y,” use each word in a sentence, and say whether the “y” is making a vowel sound or a consonant sound in the sentence.

- Ask the students to use their journals to list each of the 11 words discussed, indicate each word’s pronunciation, explain its meaning, and use the word preceded correctly by “a” or “an” in a sentence, referring to the dictionary as needed.

## Extensions

- Make two lists: one list of words that start with a vowel that sounds like a vowel and one list of words that start with a vowel that sounds like a consonant. Refer to a dictionary to find five or more new examples of each kind of word, and place the word in the appropriate column. Add to the list whenever a new word is discovered.
- Make two lists: one list of words that start with a consonant that sounds like a consonant and one list of words that start with a consonant that sounds like a vowel. Refer to a dictionary to find five or more new examples of each kind of word, and place the word in the appropriate column. Add to the list whenever a new word is discovered.
- Make a list of 20 words that start or end with “y,” and use each word in a sentence.



## REVIEW OF PARTS OF SPEECH

### Background Information

**Parts of speech** are the classes that **grammarians**, people who study grammar as a field of knowledge, use to group words or phrases and describe their role in a sentence. There are eight parts of speech in the English language — noun, pronoun, article, adjective, conjunction, preposition, verb, and adverb — and each will be discussed in more detail in the next part of this section.

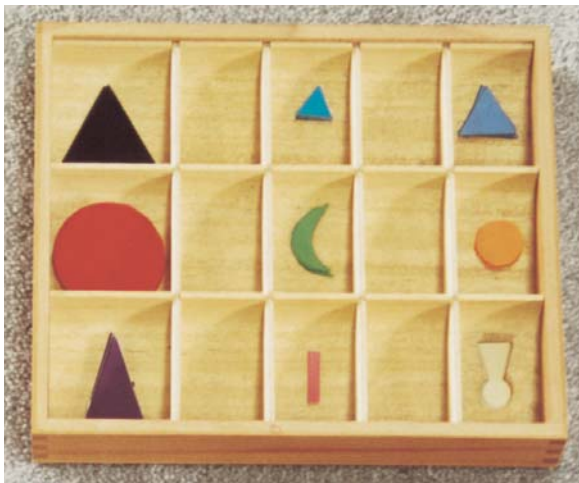
A ninth part of speech, the **interjection**, expresses an emotion or outburst. Examples: Ouch! Yikes! Since the interjection can be a sentence by itself, most grammarians no longer list it with the other parts of speech, and it will not receive a separate part here.

Students in a Montessori program become familiar with sentences and parts of speech at an early age. However, students entering the upper elementary level in Year 4 will benefit from review and practice, to make sure that they have a solid understanding before they begin to work with more complicated sentences. In addition to reviewing the parts of speech and their

functions, teachers will need to review this basic information about sentences:

- A **sentence** is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.
- The **subject** of a sentence is the word or group of words that performs the action, is being acted upon, or is being described in the sentence. Example: Juan rode his bike. In this example, “Juan” is the subject of the sentence, the one performing the action. Example: Marla was taken to the hospital. In this example, “Marla” is the subject of the sentence, the one being acted upon. Example: Bob was happy. In this example, “Bob” is the subject of the sentence, the one being described.
- The **predicate** of a sentence is the word or group of words that shows what the action in the sentence is. The action can be something the subject is doing, something that is being done to the subject, or something the subject is experiencing. Example: Juan rode his bike. In this example, “rode his bike” is the predicate of the sentence, something the subject is doing. Example: Marla was taken to the hospital. In this example, “was taken to the hospital” is the predicate of the sentence, something that is being done to the subject. Example: After the party, Bob was happy. In this example, “After the party” and “was happy” make up the predicate of the sentence, something the subject is experiencing. (Note that as this example shows, the predicate can come before as well as after the subject in the sentence.)

- The predicate of a sentence contains at least one **verb**, a word that can show action in three different ways: physical action, activity in the mind, or the subject's state of being. A verb shows the action being taken by the subject or the action being done to the subject. Example: Juan rode his bike. In this example, "rode" is the verb of the sentence, the action being taken by the subject. Example: Marla was taken to the hospital. In this example, "was taken" is the verb of the sentence, the action being done to the subject. Example: Bob was happy. In this example, "was" is the verb of the sentence, leading to another word describing the state of being of the subject.
- The parts of speech in a sentence work together to form a subject and a predicate and create a written unit of expression that can stand on its own.



## Note to the teacher

To review basic information, resources, and activities related to sentences and parts of speech, teachers can refer to the NAMC Lower Elementary Language Arts manual. Teachers who have access to Montessori grammar boxes may wish to use them, especially for Year 4 students. In these boxes, solid shapes of different colors are used to represent the parts of speech.

## Parts of speech symbols

- noun — large black triangle
- adjective — small dark blue triangle
- article — small light blue triangle (smaller than adjective triangle)
- pronoun — tall, skinny purple triangle
- verb — large red circle
- adverb — orange circle (smaller than verb circle)
- conjunction — narrow pink bar (like a pink hyphen)
- preposition — green crescent
- interjection — gold triangle upside down on top of a gold circle

The following sections provides expanded information about these parts of speech:

- nouns
- pronouns

- articles
- adjectives
- conjunctions
- prepositions
- verbs
- adverbs

The activities in these sections build on concepts to which the students were introduced in the lower elementary years. It is recommended that before presenting these activities, the teacher provide the students with opportunities to carry out the review activities contained in the previous two parts of the grammar section (review of vowels and consonants, review of parts of speech).

### Did you know?

Parts of speech do not always match up between languages. For example, in Japanese, adjectives can have a past tense, and there are no articles.

## TEACHER'S SAMPLE Review sheet for parts of speech

Below are examples of sentences provided so that the teacher may create working copies of student review sheets. There is a separate file provided on the curriculum support material CD for Upper Elementary Language Arts, which provides templates in Microsoft Word for the teacher to use for creating the student review sheets for this particular subject matter.

### Identifying Parts of Speech in a Sentence

1. Cover the right-hand column before you start.
2. Beside each of the words under the left-hand sentences below, write the part of speech.
3. Uncover the right-hand column to check your answers.

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#### Sentence

**Part of Speech** (noun, pronoun, adjective, article, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, interjection)

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Completed example:

The cat ate food from the bowl.

cat = *noun*

ate = *verb*

from = *preposition*

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cat = noun

ate = verb

from = preposition

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Beautiful clouds floated slowly through the sky.

Beautiful =

slowly =

the =

---

Beautiful = adjective

slowly = adverb

the = article

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After his yellow sweater shrank, it was too small for him to wear.

sweater =

shrank =

it =

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sweater = noun

shrank = verb

it = pronoun

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Ugh! When the skunk was scared, it made a smell and ran away.

Ugh! =

When =

and =

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Ugh! = interjection

When = conjunction (subordinating)

and = conjunction (coordinating)

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## ACTIVITY 1

# Identifying Parts of Speech in a Sentence



### Purpose

To practice identifying parts of speech within a sentence, both by seeing in a sentence and by hearing a sentence read aloud.

### Material

Up to ten index cards, each containing a sentence written large enough to be easily seen by the students. For self-correction, the back of each card will label the subject, predicate, and verb of the sentence.

Up to 20 index cards (of a different color than the ten index cards), each containing a sentence written large enough to be easily seen by the students. Each sentence will contain circled examples of the eight parts

of speech, one or more examples per sentence. For self-correction, the back of each card will identify the part of the speech that is circled (noun, article, adjective, conjunction, preposition, verb, adverb, pronoun).

Teacher-prepared review sheet, Identifying parts of speech in a sentence (available on the curriculum support material CD for Language Arts).

Sheet of paper containing up to five sentences.

Language Arts journals and pencils.

### Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers review this concept in Year 4 and as needed in Years 5 and 6. This activity may be carried out in parts, especially with Year 4 students.
- Announce that the students will have the opportunity to practice finding parts of speech in sentences.

### SENTENCES

- Review what is meant by a sentence, then review the terminology associated with studying sentences (subject, predicate, verb), emphasizing what a sentence must contain to be a sentence. If needed, discuss some examples of non-sentences (e.g., In the morning.) and sentences (e.g., In the morning, the pony jumped up from its bed of straw and ran into the corral.) to clarify the difference between them.

- Demonstrate the ten index cards reviewing subject, predicate, and verb, then shuffle the cards so that they are in random order.
- Invite a student to read the sentence on the first card aloud, then identify the subject, predicate, and verb. Show the students that the answer can be verified by looking at the back of the card.
- Repeat with another student and a different card. Continue until all the students have had a turn at reading a card and identifying the subject, predicate, and verb.
- Encourage the students to continue on their own, practicing identifying the subject, predicate, and verb in each card's sentence, then checking the answer on the back of the card.

### **PARTS OF SPEECH**

- Review the eight parts of speech (noun, article, adjective, conjunction, preposition, verb, adverb, and pronoun), what they are and their functions, asking the students for an example of each used in a sentence. Explain that the ninth part of speech, the interjection, is not usually listed with the other parts of speech because it can be a sentence by itself. Provide an example of an interjection (e.g., Ugh!).
- Demonstrate the 20 cards containing circled examples of the eight parts of speech, then shuffle the cards so that they are in random order.

- Invite a student to read the sentence on the first card aloud, then identify the parts of speech represented by the circled words. Show the students that the answer can be verified by looking at the back of the card. (Option for Year 4 students: At first ask them to place on the circled part of speech the appropriate symbols from the grammar box.)
- Repeat with another student and a different card. Continue until all the students have had a turn at reading a card and identifying the circled parts of speech.
- Encourage the students to continue on their own, practicing identifying the circled parts of speech on each card, then checking the answers on the back of the card.
- Demonstrate the review sheet and work through a few examples with the students. Encourage the students to use the review sheet as another way of practicing identifying parts of speech.

### **HEARING SENTENCES AND PARTS OF SPEECH**

- Pick up the sheet of paper containing up to five sentences, and read aloud the first sentence. Ask the students to say how they know this is a sentence, this time from hearing the sentence rather than seeing it. Then invite the students to take turns identifying the subject, predicate, and verb.

- Repeat with the second sentence, and continue until all students have had at least two turns.
- Read aloud the first sentence again. This time, ask the students to identify parts of speech in the sentence, again from hearing the sentence rather than seeing it.
- Repeat with the remaining sentences until all students have had several turns identifying parts of speech.
- Invite a student to compile a new sentence and say it aloud. Then invite the other students to take turns identifying the parts of speech in the sentence.
- Repeat, inviting another student to compile a new sentence and the others to identify the parts of speech.
- Ask the students to use their journals to write ten sentences. For half of the sentences, ask the students to identify subject, predicate, and verb, placing this information in parentheses after the sentence. For the other half, ask the students to identify parts of speech, two or three per sentence, again placing the information in parentheses after the sentence. Example: Kiran raced to the fence. (Kiran = subject, raced to the fence = predicate, raced = verb)

## Extensions

- Write sentences on 15 or more index cards, one sentence per card. Then write a number on the bottom corner of each card. Circle, but do not label, one part of speech on each card. On a separate sheet of paper, write the number of each card and identify the corresponding part of speech circled. Distribute the cards to several classmates, choose a leader, then play a version of “Simon Says.” For example, the leader says, “If you have a preposition circled, take two giant steps forward” or “If you have a noun circled, take a baby step back.” Students can take turns being the leader and can check answers as they wish by referring to the sheet of paper listing the numbers and corresponding parts of speech.
- In a group, one person choose a part of speech, such as “verb,” then say aloud a verb to start a word game. Example: “frustrate.” The next person says a verb that begins with the last letter of the previous verb. Example: “embroil.” The next says a verb that begins with the last letter of the previous verb. Example: “link.” And so on. Continue for a set amount of time (for example, the time on an egg timer), then switch to a different part of speech. As an extra challenge, create a name for this word game.