

Writing Better Sentences: Noun Modifiers

A modifier is a word (or a group of words) that talks about another word. Modifiers give more information.

Adjectives

Adjectives are modifiers. They describe people, places and things. For example:

- There is a red book on the big table.

In this sentence, there are two modifiers: RED and BIG.

Noun Modifiers

A noun can talk about another noun. Here is an example:

- This is a history book.

BOOK is the main noun. It is the important thing in the sentence. The noun HISTORY tells us something about the book.

Understanding noun modifiers helps students write better sentences. The sentences use fewer words to say the same idea. Look at this example:

- It's a spoon made from metal.
- It's a **metal** spoon.

The second sentence is better. It tells us about the spoon, but uses fewer words.

About Noun Modifiers

Here are a couple of notes about noun modifiers.

Plural forms of noun modifiers are usually (but not always) changed to the single form. Notice in this example, the word TOMATO is the modifier; SOUP is the main noun.

- It's really hard to buy soup made from **tomatoes** in this country.
- It's really hard to buy **tomato** soup in this country.

When the noun modifier has a number, we usually write it with a hyphen.

- I have a contract at the bank for **seven months**.
- I have a **seven-month** contract at the bank.

Practice Questions

Rewrite the sentences by putting the correct noun modifier in front of the main noun.

1. Could you please pass me a spoon for the soup?
2. We need to buy a couple of chairs for the office.
3. It's a magazine about hockey.
4. We should get another leash for the dog.
5. When I was a kid, I built a fort in a tree.
6. It's really hard to buy soup made from tomatoes in this country.
7. The doctor checked the pressure of my blood.
8. My sister is studying four courses in university.
9. A degree from university is necessary to get a job these days.
10. I need to purchase a battery for my car.

Answers

1. Could you please pass me a spoon for the soup?
Could you please pass me a soup spoon?
2. We need to buy a couple of chairs for the office.
We need to buy a couple of office chairs.
3. It's a magazine about hockey.
It's a hockey magazine.
4. We should get another leash for the dog.
We should get another dog leash.
5. When I was a kid, I built a fort in a tree.
When I was a kid, I built a tree fort.
6. It's really hard to buy soup made from tomatoes in this country.
It's really hard to buy tomato soup in this country.
7. The doctor checked the pressure of my blood.
The doctor checked my blood pressure.
8. My sister is studying four courses in university.
My sister is studying four university courses.
9. A degree from university is necessary to get a job these days.
A university degree is necessary to get a job these days.
10. I need to purchase a battery for my car.
I need to purchase a car battery.