Introduction

Why Are Nouns, Pronouns, Articles and Determiners Important?

Nouns and pronouns are essential for describing people, objects, conditions, actions, and concepts.

In Speech-Language Pathology, professionals frequently use nouns and pronouns when writing:

- clinical reports;
- assessment summaries;
- case histories;
- therapy notes;
- observations;
- recommendations.

For example:

The child has a speech disorder.

- **child** → noun
- **speech disorder** → noun phrase

Another example:

She produces several consonant sounds incorrectly.

- **She** → pronoun
- **consonant sounds** → noun phrase

Articles and determiners help us specify whether we are referring to something generally, specifically, or as one item among several.

Compare:

A child was referred to the clinic.

and:

The child was referred to the clinic.

The first sentence introduces a child who has not been previously identified. The second refers to a specific child already known in the context.

Nouns

What Is a Noun?

A **noun** is a word used to name a person, place, object, animal, idea, condition, or concept.

Examples in Speech-Language Pathology

Category	Examples
Person	child, therapist, parent, clinician
Object	microphone, device, picture, book
Place	clinic, school, hospital
Communication concept	language, speech, communication
Clinical concept	disorder, assessment, intervention
Linguistic unit	sound, word, sentence, syllable

Examples

The **therapist** assessed the child's **language**.

The **child** produced several **sounds** incorrectly.

The **assessment** lasted 30 minutes.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Countable Nouns

Countable nouns can be counted individually.

Examples:

- one child → two children
- one session → three sessions
- one assessment → two assessments
- one sound → several sounds
- one sentence → ten sentences

They can occur in singular and plural forms.

The therapist conducted **an assessment**.

The therapist conducted **two assessments**.

Uncountable Nouns

Uncountable nouns are generally not counted as individual units.

Common examples in clinical and academic English include:

- information
- advice
- equipment
- communication
- language
- vocabulary
- research

We normally do **not** say:

✗an information

Instead:

✓some information

or:

✓a piece of information

Similarly:

✗an advice

✓some advice

✓a piece of advice

Clinical Examples

The therapist collected **some information** about the child's development.

The parents received **some advice** about communication strategies.

The clinic purchased **new equipment**.

Singular and Plural Nouns

Most regular nouns form the plural by adding **-s**:

- child → children *(irregular)*
- therapist → therapists
- session → sessions
- sound → sounds
- assessment → assessments

Some nouns have irregular plural forms:

Singular	Plural

child	children
person	people
man	men
woman	women
foot	feet
tooth	teeth

Important Clinical Examples

The **child** has difficulty producing /r/.

The **children** have different communication needs.

Quick Check 1

Question

Which sentence is grammatically correct?

A. The therapist gave the parent an advice.
B. The therapist gave the parent some advice.
C. The therapist gave the parent many advice.
D. The therapist gave the parent two advice.

Correct answer: B

Feedback:
"Advice" is an uncountable noun. We say **some advice** or **a piece of advice**, not "an advice" or "two advice."

Articles – A, An and The

English has three common articles:

- **a**
- **an**
- **the**

There is also the **zero article**, meaning that no article is used.

A

Use **a** before a singular countable noun when the following word begins with a consonant sound.

Examples:

a therapist

a language disorder

a university

Notice that **university** begins with the consonant sound /j/, so we say:

a university

An

Use **an** before a singular countable noun when the following word begins with a vowel sound.

Examples:

an assessment

an interview

an example

an intervention

an hour

The choice between **a** and **an** depends on the **sound**, not simply the spelling.

The

Use **the** when referring to a specific person, object, or thing that is known or identifiable from the context.

Example:

A child entered the clinic.

Later:

The child sat next to the therapist.

The first sentence introduces the child.

The second sentence refers to the specific child already mentioned.

Clinical Example

A child was referred to the clinic.

The child presented with difficulties in speech production.

Quick Check 2

Choose the correct article.

1. The therapist conducted ___ assessment.

A. a
B. an
C. the
D. no article

Answer: B — an assessment

2. The therapist interviewed ___ parent.

A. a
B. an
C. some
D. much

Answer: A — a parent

3. The therapist completed an assessment. ___ assessment took 45 minutes.

A. A
B. An
C. The
D. No article

Answer: C — The assessment

The Zero Article

Sometimes we do not use an article before a noun.

This is common when we talk about things in a general sense.

Compare:

Language is important for communication.

Here, language is discussed generally.

But:

The language used by the child was difficult to understand.

Here, a specific type or instance of language is being discussed.

Compare

Children need opportunities to communicate.

General statement.

The children in the clinic need additional support.

Specific children.

Clinical Examples

Speech develops gradually.

Communication is important for social interaction.

Children learn language through interaction.

But:

The communication observed during the assessment was limited.

Pronouns

What Is a Pronoun?

A **pronoun** is a word that can replace a noun or noun phrase.

For example:

The child entered the room. **The child** sat beside the therapist.

We can avoid repetition:

The child entered the room. **He** sat beside the therapist.

Subject Pronouns

Subject pronouns are commonly used as the subject of a sentence.

Pronoun	Example
I	I assessed the child.
you	You completed the assessment.
he	He produced the sound correctly.
she	She followed the instruction.
it	It was difficult.
we	We discussed the results.
they	They attended the session.

Clinical Examples

She followed two-step instructions.

He produced several consonant sounds.

They attended the therapy session.

Object Pronouns

Object pronouns occur after verbs and prepositions.

Subject	Object
I	me
you	you
he	him
she	her
it	it
we	us
they	them

Examples:

The therapist assessed **him**.

The therapist interviewed **her**.

The clinician gave **them** some advice.

The parent spoke to **us**.

Quick Check 3

Choose the correct pronoun.

1.

The therapist assessed the child. The therapist assessed ___.

A. he
B. him
C. his
D. himself

Answer: B — him

2.

The parents attended the session. The therapist spoke to ___.

A. they
B. their
C. them
D. theirs

Answer: C — them

3.

The child completed the task. ___ followed the instructions correctly.

A. Him
B. His
C. He
D. Her

Answer: C — He

Possessive Determiners and Possessive Pronouns

Possessive Determiners

Possessive determiners show possession or relationship.

They are:

- my
- your
- his
- her
- its
- our
- their

Examples:

The child completed **his** task.

The therapist reviewed **her** notes.

The parents discussed **their** concerns.

The clinic updated **its** records.

Important

Possessive determiners are followed by a noun:

my assessment

her report

their child

our clinic

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns can stand alone.

They include:

- mine
- yours
- his
- hers
- ours
- theirs

Examples:

This report is **mine**.

The assessment results are **hers**.

The notes are **theirs**.

Compare:

This is **my report**.

This report is **mine**.

Possessive 's

We can also show possession using **'s**.

Examples:

the child's speech

the therapist's notes

the parent's concerns

For plural nouns ending in **-s**, we normally use an apostrophe:

the parents' concerns

the therapists' reports

Determiners

What Are Determiners?

Determiners are words that come before nouns and provide information about quantity, identity, possession, or reference.

Common determiners include:

- this
- that
- these
- those
- some
- any
- many
- much
- few
- little
- each
- every
- my
- your
- the

This, That, These and Those

Singular

this = near

This child is ready for the assessment.

that = farther away or previously mentioned

That assessment was completed last week.

Plural

these = near

These children attend therapy twice a week.

those = farther away or previously mentioned

Those sessions were cancelled.

Some and Any

Some is commonly used in affirmative sentences.

The therapist collected **some information**.

The child produced **some sounds** correctly.

Any is commonly used in negative sentences and questions.

The therapist did not find **any difficulties**.

Did the child have **any problems** with comprehension?

Many and Much

Use **many** with countable plural nouns.

many children

many sessions

many sounds

Use **much** with uncountable nouns.

much information

much advice

much equipment

Examples:

The therapist observed **many difficulties**.

The report does not contain **much information** about expressive language.

Few and Little

Use **few** with countable plural nouns.

few sessions

few errors

few children

Use **little** with uncountable nouns.

little information

little evidence

little progress

Compare:

The child made **few errors**.

The report contains **little information** about the child's early development.

Pronoun Reference in Clinical Writing

Pronouns make writing more concise, but they must have a clear reference.

Consider:

The mother spoke to the therapist because **she** was concerned.

Who does **she** refer to?

- the mother?
- the therapist?

The sentence is potentially ambiguous.

Better Clinical Writing

The mother spoke to the therapist because **the mother was concerned about the child's speech development**.

Or:

Because she was concerned about the child's speech development, the mother spoke to the therapist.

The second version is clearer because the context identifies **she** as the mother.

Clinical Writing Principle

In professional clinical writing:

Clarity is more important than avoiding repetition.

If a pronoun could have more than one possible reference, repeat the noun.

This is particularly important in:

- assessment reports;
- case histories;
- clinical notes;
- referral letters;
- progress reports.

Clinical Application Activity

Case: Sara

Sara is a seven-year-old child referred to a speech-language therapist because of difficulties with speech production.

During the assessment, the therapist observed several sound production errors. Sara followed most instructions correctly. Her parents reported that she had received therapy before.

Task 1: Identify the nouns

Find five nouns in the paragraph.

Possible answers:

- child
- therapist
- difficulties
- speech
- assessment
- instructions
- parents
- therapy

Task 2: Identify the pronouns

Find the pronouns.

Answer:

- she
- her

Task 3: Identify the determiners

Find examples of determiners.

Answer:

- a
- the
- several
- most
- her

Task 4: Improve the sentence

Original:

The therapist spoke to the mother after she completed the assessment.

Why might this sentence be unclear?

Possible problem:
The pronoun **she** could refer to the therapist or the mother.

Rewrite it clearly.

Possible answer:

The therapist spoke to the mother after **the therapist completed the assessment**.

Or:

After completing the assessment, the therapist spoke to the mother.