

THE COMMON NOUN

Recognize a common noun when you find one.

Nouns name people, places, and things. Every noun can further be classified as common or **proper**. A *common* noun names *general* items.

Go into the kitchen. What do you find? Refrigerator, magnet, stove, window, coffee maker, wallpaper, spatula, sink, plate—all of these *things* are common nouns.

Leave the house. Where can you go? Mall, restaurant, school, post office, backyard, beach, pet store, supermarket, gas station—all of these *places* are common nouns.

Go to the mall. Who do you find? Teenager, grandmother, salesclerk, police officer, toddler, manager, window dresser, janitor, shoplifter—all of these *people* are common nouns.

The important thing to remember is that common nouns are *general* names. Thus, they are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence or are part of a title. **Proper nouns**, those that name *specific*, one-of-a-kind things, do require capitalization, no matter where they appear in the sentence.

Notice the difference in the chart below:

COMMON NOUNS	PROPER NOUNS
coffee shop	Starbucks
waiter	Simon
jeans	Levi's
sandwich	Big Mac
chair	Roll-O-Rocker
venue	Hollywood Bowl
country	Australia
fire fighter	Captain Richard Orsini

Read these examples:

Although there are five other **chairs** in the living room, everyone in Jim's family fights to sit in the puffy new **Roll-O-Rocker**.

Chairs = common noun; **Roll-O-Rocker** = proper noun.

Harriet threw the stale cucumber **sandwich** in the trash can and fantasized about a **Big Mac** dripping with special sauce.

Sandwich = common noun; **Big Mac** = proper noun.

Because we like an attentive **waiter**, we always ask for **Simon** when we eat at Mama Rizzoli's Pizzeria.

Waiter = common noun; **Simon** = proper noun.

