

The Common Noun

Recognize a *common noun* when you see 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 see? 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 see? 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* things, do require capitalization.

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
arena	Amway Arena
country	Australia
fire fighter	Captain Richard Orsini

Here are some sample sentences:

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.

