

## What Are Common and Proper Nouns?

A **common noun** is the “general” or “generic” name of a person, place, thing, or idea. The common nouns have been marked in the following example sentence:

In the fictional “Star Wars” **saga**, Anakin Skywalker became Darth Vader and the **voice** of James Earl Jones also became famously known as the **voice** of Darth Vader.

A **proper noun** is the “particular” name of a person, place, thing, or idea. It is very specific and can be considered the “only one.” Here is the same sentence with the proper nouns also marked. Do you see the difference?

In the fictional “**Star Wars**” **saga**, **Anakin Skywalker** became **Darth Vader** and the **voice** of **James Earl Jones** also became famously known as the **voice** of **Darth Vader**.

Notice that all the proper nouns are capitalized and can appear anywhere within a sentence. This helps to show specificity. Proper nouns are always the names of people, brands, locations, days of the week, months of the year, names of religions, and religious holidays. Any type of noun can be a proper noun, as long as it specifically names something.



Mount Rushmore National Monument—South Dakota  
Photo by Scott Catron May 2004-wikimedia.org

### FROM *THE PRINCESS BRIDE* BY WILLIAM GOLDMAN

“**Prince Humperdinck** watched her as she began the long cross to him. ‘When we are out of **sight**,’ he said to **Count Rugen**, ‘take that **man** in black and put him in the fifth **level** of the **Zoo of Death**.’

The **Count** nodded. ‘For a **moment**, I believed you when you **swore**.’

‘I spoke **truth**; I never **lie**,’ the **Prince** replied. ‘I said I would not **hurt** him. But I never for a **moment** said he would not suffer **pain**. You will do the actual **tormenting**; I will only spectate.’ He opened his **arms** then for his **Princess**.