Special Adjectives, Noun Phrases in Noun Phrases

We now know that noun phrases can contain *determiners* (Det) and *adjective phrases* (AdjP) and a single *subject noun* (N). We also know that adjective phrases contain an optional *intensifier* (Int) and must have an obligatory adjective. We need to talk about adjectives a little more. Then we can move on to a discussion of noun phrases built into noun phrases.

Quantifiers:

Lets look at a few sentences:

> The three cute cuddly little kittens snuggled together in the box.
> Four fat frogs slept fitfully on the log.
> Several sleepy students sat in the room.

All of these sentences contain a number, or a word that shows something about relative quantity: "three," "four," and "several." The big question, of course, is what kind of words are these? Are they intensifiers, adjectives, nouns? If you think about it, these words are really a form of adjective as they sit in front of nouns and are used to show something about that noun (as most adjectives seem to do). But they don't seem to take an intensifier--you can't say "the very three cute cuddly little kittens." After all three is three--there can't be "very three" of anything. So if these number words are adjectives they are a special kind of adjective because they don't take an intensifier. At the same time they aren't interchangeable in the adjective phrase the way that some other adjectives are. For instance in the sentence

> The three cute cuddly little kittens snuggled together in the box.

It is possible to change the adjectives around, i.e.:

> The three little cuddly cute kittens snuggled together in the box.

But the number word needs to stay out in front, i.e. it is not correct to say:

> The cute cuddly three little kittens snuggled together in the box.

Clearly "number words" need to be kept distinct from other adjectives. This is done by calling these words "quantifiers" (Quant). We can add quantifiers to our noun phrase rule as follows:

> **NP ➔ (Det)(Quant)(AdjP)*N**

Notice how the quantifier doesn't have the "repetition asterisk" that adjective phrases include. This is because there can only be one quantifier per noun phrase, …which makes sense if you think about it: if you said

The three, five, cute, cuddly, little kittens snuggled together in the box.

People would be inclined to say things like "well make up your mind….how many cats were there anyway?" So only one quantifier per NP.

Possessive Noun Phrases:

What else is there? Well let's take a look at some sentences that show possession:

Mr. Jones' class is the most fun I've had in a long time.
The storm's center was over Washington State.
The very large storm's very tumultuous center was over Washington State.
The three long, very complicated sentences' noun phrases were complicated.
Luigi's cute cat's belly was full.

….hmmm. What's going on here? Lets take a look at the first sentence to begin with.

Mr. Jones' class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

What's going on here? Well first of all, notice how the word *class* could take an adjective phrase:

Mr. Jones' very exciting *English class* is the most fun I've had in a long time.

The next thing worth noting is the way that Mr. Jones' is a possessive noun that is appropriately marked with an ' (An apostrophe).

Q. **Do you use a single apostrophe or 's to show possession after nouns ending in "s"?**
A. Both are considered correct style depending on the rules being used. Different organizations have different rules about this sort of thing. Sometimes the rule changes depending on the organization that the writing is being put together for.

So how do we account for the fact that there seems to be something that looks like a noun in front of the rest of a noun phrase? Is "Mr. Jones'" a noun phrase? We could check this out by trying to replace the item that we think might be a noun phrase with a known noun phrase, i.e.:

The teacher's class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

The tall fuzzy person's class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

Okay…but what else? Well, you may recall the test that will indicate that something is a noun phrase: it can be replaced with a pronoun. Lets try this out on our sentence:

The teacher's class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

His class is the most fun I've had in a long time.
Or
Her class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

Seems to work huh. Except that the pronouns that we can use in this situation are slightly different: they are possessive pronouns like *my, our, your, his, her, their, its*. So the thing that appears at the front of our noun phrase is….another noun phrase. But is this noun phrase part of the main "subject" noun phrase? Actually it is because the larger unit—"the teacher's class"—in the first sentence here, for instance, can be replaced with the pronoun "it" (using our same test

So (this is getting weird…but you'll get it in a bit) how do we show that noun phrases can show up inside noun phrases? We do this as follows:

$$NP \rightarrow (\frac{Det}{NP})(Quant)(AdjP)N$$

Why do we show the Det and NP together? **Because you can only have one or the other.** And both are optional. The situation is getting somewhat complex huh? It gets much easier if you just do a few. So lets try a few out.

Mr. Jones' class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

Mr. Jones' exciting English class is the most fun I've had in a long time.

The storm’s center was over Washington state.

The very large storm’s very tumultuous winds did much damage.

The three long, very complicated sentences’ noun phrases were difficult to diagram.

Luigi’s cute cat’s intellectual capacity is limited.

Homework (Draw Sentence Tree Diagrams For the Following):

1. A book’s cover is only that.
2. The student’s large, rather heavy backpack sagged at the bottom.
3. The twenty-five girls’ piercing screams could be heard for miles.
4. The five, long, complicated English question’s answers were difficult to write.
5. The last one was actually quite easy though.