

CLASSIFIERS

A classifier is a word preceding a noun to specify the category in particular cases. It is used in the following cases:

- **For people or things defined in the singular, and could thus be translated as “the” in French (or English).**

Tus Tooj	- The Tong, as they say, “The Stone”
Tus dab	- The Spirit
Lub tsev	- The House

- **With a demonstrative singular:**

Lub tsev no	- This house.
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- **With a possessive, always in the singular:**

Lawv lub tsev	- Their house.
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- **With a numeral:**

Ob lub tsev	- Two houses.
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- **Quantitatively with an adjective before it (for this, see the chapter on quantitates):**

Ntau lub tsev	- Many houses.
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- **Finally, with question words involving a definite answer or numeral:**

Lub tsev twg? / Lub no	- Which house? / This one
Pes tsawg lub? 3 lub	- How many houses? Three

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- **The classifier is used alone, when we already know what it is and it is therefore equivalent to a pronoun:**

Lub no	- This (demonstrative)
Kuv lub	- Mine (possessive)
Peb lub	- Three (numeral)
Ntau lub	- Much (quantitative)
Lub uas...	- Which (relative)

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There are, however, many exceptions:

- **The classifier is used with some proper names or names that are used to refer to God (Ntuj, Tswv Ntuj Tswv Teb, Huab Tais Ntuj...); It is often omitted when the meaning is unclear, or after a verb when the noun phrase is with the verb as well:**

Kuv pub rau Tooj	- I give it to Tong.
Ntuj qhia Sao tom nws tsim	- Heaven Explained to Shao how to
tsim lub ntiaj teb	make the earth.
Kuv mob tes	- I have a sore hand.
Nws ntaus nab	- He hit the snake.
Kuv mus tsev	- I'm going home.

- **It is never used with “txiv” or “niam” in the sense of “father” or “mother,” because with the classifier, then these two words mean “husband” or “mother.”**

Nws txiv	- Her father
Nws tus txiv	- Her Husband

- **It is most commonly omitted with some possessive terms, as so:**

Kuv tsev	- My house
Kuv poj niam	- My wife
kuv tes	- My hand

- **... Or with numerals in the following expressions:**

ob niam txiv	- The husband and wife
ob txiv tub	- Father and child
ob niam tub	- The mother and child
ob kwv tij	- The two brothers
ob viv ncaus	- The two sisters
ob nus muag	- Brother and sister
ob pog nyab	- The stepmother and her daughter.

- **We will also see, in the chapter on numerals, if a numeral is attached directly to the name without going through the classifier, while the numeral indicates a measure of quantity, length, weight, area or time.**

ib lub tsev	- A house
but, ib ---- tsev	- A household, that this house may include.