

## Pronouns

### What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is used in place of a noun. Different forms are used to show person, number, gender, and case. There are personal, interrogative, indefinite, demonstrative, and reflexive pronouns.

- ❖ A **personal pronoun** refers to one or more individuals or things. Personal pronouns may be in the nominative, objective or possessive case.

Singular	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
1 <sup>st</sup> person	I	me	my, mine
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	you	you	your
3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine	he	him	his
3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine	she	her	her
3 <sup>rd</sup> person neuter	it	it	its

Plural	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
1 <sup>st</sup> person	we	us	our, ours
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	you	you	your, yours
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	they	them	their, theirs

For example:        *I* took *my* sister to *her* doctor.  
                             *She* gave *us* a new table for *our* kitchen.

- ❖ An **interrogative pronoun** is used to ask a question. Interrogative pronouns include: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *what*, and *which*.

For example:        *Who* left the light on?  
                             *Which* book is yours?

- ❖ A **relative pronoun** relates groups of words to nouns or other pronouns.

For example:        Matt was the one *who* built the picnic table.  
                             The house, *which* has a garden in bloom, is very inviting.

- ❖ An **indefinite pronoun** refers to a general person or thing. Singular indefinite pronouns include: *one*, *each*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *no one*, *anybody*, *somebody*, *nobody*, *everybody*, *anyone*, and *someone*. Plural indefinite pronouns include: *several*, *both*, *many*, and *few*.

For example:        *No one* has a good idea for the workshop. (singular)  
                             *Many* go on vacation in August. (plural)

The indefinite pronouns *some*, *none*, *all*, *most*, and *any* can be singular or plural depending on the meaning of the sentence.

For example:        *Some* of the *work* is done. (singular)  
                             *Some* of the *marks* come off easily. (plural)

- ❖ A **demonstrative pronoun** identifies or points out a noun. The demonstrative pronouns include: *that*, *this*, *these*, *those*, and *such*.

For example:        *This* is more expensive than *that*.  
                             *These* are my favorites, not *those*.

- ❖ A **reflexive pronoun** refers to a noun and provides emphasis or shows distinction from others. Reflexive pronouns are formed with the suffixes *-self* and *-selves*.

For example:        Bianca made the cake by *herself*.  
                             Erin and Renee tried to occupy *themselves* when work was slow.

### **Pronoun and antecedent agreement**

A pronoun must agree in person and number with its antecedent, the word that the pronoun replaces or the word to which it refers.

Incorrect:        *A student* should be careful about checking the grammar in *their* writing.  
Correct:         *Students* should be careful about checking the grammar in *their* writing.

- ❖ Antecedents joined by the word *and* take plural pronouns.

For example:        Lisa *and* Tracy are writing *their* papers.

- ❖ Use a singular pronoun to refer to two or more singular antecedents joined by the words *or* or *nor*.

For example:        Ben *or* James will read *his* essay.

- ❖ When there is more than one type of antecedent – a singular and a plural – joined by the words *or* or *nor*, the pronoun agrees with the closest antecedent.

For example:        The teacher *or the students* will have *their* way.  
                             The students *or the teacher* will have *her* way.

### **Vague pronoun reference**

In conversation, the words *it* and *they* are often used to make vague reference to people and situations. In writing, more precise identification is needed.

Vague:              We are having difficulty with the math lessons. *It* is confusing.  
Better:             We are having difficulty with the math lessons, which are confusing.