

Grammar Handout 068A

Pronoun Usage

A pronoun is a word used in place of one or more than one noun. It may stand for a person, place, thing, or idea. There are many different kinds of pronouns.

Person Pronouns:

- **Subjective:** I, you, he, she, it, we, they
- **Objective:** me, you, him, her, it, us, them
- **Possessive:** my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, theirs
- **Interrogative Pronouns:** who, whom, what, which, whose
- **Demonstrative Pronouns:** this, that, these, those

Indefinite Pronouns:

- **Singular:**
(one-words): one, anyone, everyone, someone,
-body words): nobody, anybody, everybody, somebody
(-thing words): nothing, anything, everything, something
(others): each, either, neither
- **Plural:** several, few, both, many
- **Singular or plural:** all, any, more, most, some

Intensive/Reflexive Pronouns: Some of the pronouns in the personal pronouns list can be combined with -self or -selves such as yourself, myself, herself, ourselves.

Subjective pronouns are used as subjects and objective **pronouns** are used as objects.

Examples:

They are getting tired. (They is the subject of the sentence)

The clerk gave the forms to me. (me is an object; clerk is the subject)

She will leave tomorrow. (She is the subject of the sentence)

The boss gave her a raise. (her is an object; boss is the subject)

Like nouns, **possessive pronouns** can be used to indicate possession. Note: Do not use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns.

When used in a sentence, a pronoun must agree in number and gender with the word that it refers to.

Examples:

Singular: Brad brought his guitar. Ann has her lunch.

Plural: Jamie and Rebecca forgot their books.

Singular: The dog is missing its collar.

Demonstrative pronouns are either singular or plural.

Examples:

Singular: This book is hers. That is a big spider.

Plural: These books are theirs. Those spiders are huge.

However, **some indefinite pronouns** are always singular, some are always plural, and some may be either singular or plural.

Examples:

Singular: Everybody took his turn in line.

Singular: Everyone on the girls' team forgot her books.

Singular: Neither of the dogs did its tricks.

Singular: Either of the boys can get his hair cut today.

Plural: Both of the girls took their cakes home.

Plural: Many people forgot their books.

Plural: Few of the dogs did their tricks.

Plural: Several of the boys can get their hair cut today.

Intensive and reflexive pronouns must refer to a previous noun or pronoun and agree in number with the words that they refer to.

Examples:

Jack fixed the computer himself.

We were supposed to do the work ourselves.

You can finish that yourself.

The children worked on the science project by themselves.

Other important information to know about pronouns:

- The personal subjective pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we, and they) can also be used as **subjective complements**. A subjective complement is a noun or pronoun which follows a linking verb and is the same as the subject.
- Example: It was she on the phone. Some abbreviated sentences that express comparisons by the words than or as create problems in determining whether to use a subjective or objective pronoun. In determining which pronoun to use, decide whether the omitted word following the pronoun is a verb. If so, the correct pronoun is the subjective pronoun.

Example: Bobby left earlier than I

(The omitted word would be "left" or "did" –a verb. Consequently, the subject pronoun I is correct.)

However, if the omitted word following the pronoun is not logically a verb, try to add words (subject and verb) before the pronoun choice. If doing so makes the sentence logical, then the correct pronoun is the objective pronoun.

Example: The dress fits me better than
(it fits) her.

(Adding "it fits" in front of pronoun her
makes sense.)

- The pronouns who and whom are **interrogative pronouns** (introduce questions) as well as **relative pronouns** (introduce subordinate clauses). Sometimes it seems difficult to know when to use who (and whoever) and whom (and whomever). The key is to use who when the word serves as the subject of a sentence and to use whom when the word does not serve as the subject.

Examples:

A child who is crying can be distracting.

(who is the subject of the clause "who is crying")

Who wants to go to the store?

(who is the subject of the sentence)

Whom did you ask to bring the cake?

We didn't know whom to call?

(In these two examples, the whom does not serve as the subject of either sentence.)

- Also remember to use who, whom, whoever, and whomever when referring to people. Use that and which when referring to animals or things.

Examples:

A child who is crying can be distracting.

The dog that was hit by the car was my dog.

Exercises: Using the above guidelines, underline the correct pronoun in the following sentences.

1. Each student brought (their, his) book
2. One boy asked us to help (him, them).
3. He took us and (they, them) to the game.
4. She can sit between you and (me, I).
5. Everyone except (he, him) is going to be there.
6. My father gave the car to John and (I, me).
7. Will you go with (us, we)?
8. It is (he, him).

9. I called as many people as (she, her).
10. (There, They're) coming tonight.
11. Please come with Harry and (me, I).
12. It is (they, them).
13. (Them, Those) books are overdue.
14. (Who, Whom) did you send on the errand?
15. Will it be (he, him)?
16. It could be (we, us).
17. My mother and (I, myself) have the same birthday.
18. (Who, Whom) told you?
19. It is (you're, your) book.
20. (Its, It's) my book.
21. It is I (whom, who) am present.
22. One of the boys saw (their, his) mother.
23. (Who, Whom) will go?
24. John and (you, yourself) will go.
25. It's (me, I).
26. The secret is between you and (they, them).
27. He is as tall as (I, me).
28. (Their, They're) on the way.
29. Father and (I, myself) arrived.
30. (Whose, Who's) book is it?
31. It will be (I, me).
32. He told the man (himself, himself).
33. It was Harry (who, which) told us.
34. Let's sit by the girl and (they, them).
35. He is the man (who, whom) I saw in the park.
36. With (who, whom) will you go?
37. All of the class except (we, us) went on the field trip.
38. Each boy ate (their, his) lunch.
39. The dog (who, which) saved the child received a medal.

40. Between him and (she, her) I prefer her.
41. (Whose, Who's) coming to dinner?
42. Is he better than (us, we)?
43. He is heavier than (I, me).
44. (There's, Theirs) not one left.
45. He chose (them, those) officers.
46. Everyone has (his, their) opinion.
47. (Who, Whom) said it was I?
48. He cut (himself, hisself).
49. These were (they, them).
50. The man (who, which) is speaking is my father.