

Personal Pronouns

Need to know:

- Pronouns are a word to substitute a proper noun (i.e. a name of a person, place, or thing).
- Using a pronoun eliminates repetition when referring to the same noun many times.
- You **MUST** be consistent in using singular and plural nouns with singular and plural pronouns.
- The most commonly used personal pronouns include: “I/me, she/her, he/him, it, they/them.”

Singular Pronouns: he/him, she/her

Use a singular personal pronoun when the noun it replaces is singular.

“Everyone (singular n.) must prove that **he or she** (singular pn.) knows the material.”

→ Notice that “everyone” is replaced by *he or she*. They are both singular.

Plural Pronouns: they/them

Use a plural personal pronoun when the noun it replaces is plural.

“Mathematicians (plural n.) must understand all elements of set theory if **they** (plural pn.) are to be considered credible.”

→ The subject “Mathematicians” is plural, so we need to use the plural *they*.

Tips:

1. When it doesn't matter if the noun is singular or plural, use the plural form and then use *they* instead of *he or she*.
→ For example: “All engineers (plural n.) must understand that they (plural pn.) should learn to write better.”
2. If the gender of the subject is unknown, use *they* to be safe.
→ This is becoming more common in academia as we move forward with new, inclusive understandings of identity.
3. An “object” is affected by the action of the subject of a sentence. Object pronouns are personal pronouns for the object of a sentence (rather than the subject like usual). The most common object pronouns are *me, her, him, it, and them*.
→ Ex. “Mom went to the store to get **me** a birthday cake.”

Possessive Pronouns

Need to Know:

- Possessive Pronouns are used to show when a noun owns or “possesses” something.
- Possessive Pronouns replace the “apostrophe + S” possessive form of nouns (Anna’s, the cat’s)
- The most commonly used possessive pronouns are “his, hers, my, mine, its, their, our, and your.”

Singular Possessive Pronouns

Use a singular pronoun when the noun it replaces is singular.

“Hannah (singular n.) lost **her** notebook the day before **her** (singular pn.) final exam.”

→ The use of the word *her* replaces the repetitive use of *Hannah’s*. Both are singular.

Plural Possessive Pronouns

Use a plural possessive pronoun when the noun it replaces is plural.

“The band wanted **their** performance to be a showstopper.”

→ Since *the band* names a group of people, then the plural possessive pronoun *they* should be used.

Multiple Possessive Pronouns

Some sentences may use more than one form of a possessive pronoun.

“The red dress is **mine**, not **yours**.”

→ In this case, “*mine*” goes with the personal pronoun “*I*.”

→ “*Yours*” goes with the personal pronoun “*you*.”

Tip:

1. Possessive pronouns never use an “apostrophe + s”
→ For example: “That new book is hers.” not “That new book is her’s.”

Indefinite Pronouns

Need to Know:

- An indefinite pronoun is a pronoun that refers to a person or a thing without being specific.
- The most commonly used indefinite pronouns include: “all, any, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everyone, everything, few, many, nobody, none, one, several, some, somebody, and someone.”

Singular Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns “either” and “neither” are always singular.

“Neither of Sam’s dogs have been well behaved.”

→ It helps to think of either and neither as a collective noun which denotes a singular unit.

Singular/Plural Indefinite Pronouns

Some indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural.

Singular: “More of it is needed”

→ Since “it” is singular, then the indefinite pronoun “more” is singular in this sentence.

Plural: “More of them are needed.”

→ Since “them” is plural, then the indefinite pronoun “more” is plural in this sentence.

Tips:

Difference Between Indefinite Pronouns and Indefinite Adjectives:

1. “Julia, please take some to Professor Lee.”
→ In this case, the word “some” is being used to replace what is being brought.
2. “Julia, please take some cookies to Professor Lee.”
→ In this sentence, “some” functions as an indefinite adjective, not an indefinite pronoun. This is because it is being used to describe the amount of cookies, instead of replacing the word “cookies” altogether.

Interrogative Pronouns

Need to Know:

- Interrogative pronouns are pronouns used to ask questions.
- They typically replace whatever or whoever is the answer to the question.
- The most commonly used interrogative pronouns are: “who, whom, whose, what, and which.”

Difference Between “Who” and “Whom.”

The interrogative pronoun “who” is used to refer to the subject, or the noun doing an action.

“Who won the prize?”

→ Notice that the person winning the prize is the subject here.

The interrogative pronoun “whom” is used to refer to the object, or the noun being acted upon.

“To whom did you award the prize?”

→ In this sentence, “whom” is being affected by the action of the subject, which is the personal pronoun “you.”

When to Use “Whose.”

The interrogative pronoun “whose” is used to ask questions of ownership.

“Whose shoes are these?”

When to use “What.”

The interrogative pronoun “what” is used to ask a question about an object or abstract concept.

“What is the title of that movie?”

When to use “Which.”

The interrogative pronoun “which” is used to ask a question that has many possible answers.

“Which type of flower do you want for the party?”

Relative Pronouns

Need to Know:

- Relative Pronouns are used to connect clauses and phrases in a sentence to a noun or another pronoun.
- The phrase modifies or describes the noun being connected.
- The relative pronouns overlap with interrogative pronouns.

Defining Clauses

Defining clauses give essential information about the noun or pronoun.

“Sarah does not like people who are rude.”

- In this sentence, the clause “who are rude” provides key information to explain which specific people Sarah does not like.

Non-Defining Clauses

Non-Defining Clauses do not provide essential information about the noun or pronoun and must be separated from the main clause with commas.

“The cake, which is red-velvet, is delicious.”

- In this sentence, the meaning can be understood without knowing the flavor of the cake.

Reflexive Pronouns

Need to Know:

- Reflexive pronouns are used when the object of a sentence is the same as the subject.
- Reflexive pronouns end with the suffix “self” or “selves.”
 - This prevents awkward repetition.

Examples:

“Charles taught himself to play the flute.”

Not

“Charles taught Charles to play the flute.”



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Demonstrative Pronouns

Need to Know:

- Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to specific people and things.
- Demonstrative pronouns convey the distance between the person or object and the speaker.
- The most commonly used demonstrative pronouns are “this/that and these/those.”

Using “This”

The demonstrative pronoun “this” is used to refer to people or objects close to the speaker.

“This chair is the most comfortable.”

Using “That”

The demonstrative pronoun “that” is used to refer to people or object far away from the speaker.

“That chair in the student lounge is comfortable.”

