

Objects (objective case)

Nouns and pronouns can be either subjects or objects in a sentence. Any noun can be either, depending on what you are saying, but when it comes to pronouns, only subject pronouns can be subjects (this is called subjective case), and only object pronouns can be objects (this is called objective case). For more on subject and object pronouns, see the tip sheet [Pronouns](#). In a sentence, a noun or object pronoun can be a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Direct object

A direct object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb. It follows an action verb:

I washed my *car*.
I washed *it*.
She fed the *kids*.
She fed *them*.

Indirect object

Indirect objects tell *to whom* or *for whom* the action of the verb is performed. We omit the words *for* and *to* from the expression; they are only implied. An indirect object comes between the verb and the direct object. The indirect objects are emphasized below:

I bought my *nephew* a bike.
I bought *him* a bike.
She gave the *kids* cookies.
She gave *them* cookies.
I did *Ivan* a favor.
I did *him* a favor.

Object of a preposition

An object of a preposition is the noun or pronoun (emphasized below) that completes a prepositional phrase (italicized below).

We bought a bike *for my nephew*.
We bought a mountain bike *for him*.
She gave cookies *to the kids*.
She gave cookies *to them*.

Reflexive pronouns

Sometimes the subject and the object refer to the same person or thing. In that case, you must use a subject pronoun (or noun) for the subject and a reflexive pronoun as the object. A reflexive pronoun is essential to the meaning of the sentence and cannot be removed without changing its essential meaning:

Reflexive pronouns as direct objects

The baby can feed *herself*.
She can feed *herself*.
Marcus drove *himself* to work.
He drove *himself*.

Reflexive pronouns as indirect objects

I bought *myself* a bike.
She cooked *herself* dinner.

Reflexive pronouns as objects of a preposition

I cooked dinner for *myself*.
They got movie tickets only for *themselves*.

The reflexive pronouns are *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves*. Notice there is no such word as *theirselves* or *theirselves*.

Emphatic pronouns

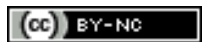
However, you can also use reflexive pronouns to emphasize the subject. Then the pronoun is called emphatic, not reflexive. An emphatic pronoun does the work of an appositive, renaming a preceding word. It is not essential to the meaning of the sentence; you can remove an emphatic pronoun without affecting the essential meaning of the sentence:

I will fix the car.
I *myself* will fix the car [*myself* emphasizes *I*].
I will fix the car *myself*.

He drove the truck.
He drove the truck *himself* [*himself* emphasizes *he*].
He *himself* drove it.

They cooked dinner.
They cooked dinner *themselves* [*themselves* emphasizes *they*].
They *themselves* cooked dinner.

Contributed by Rosemary McKeever



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