

Pronouns

Pronouns replace and refer to nouns. This noun should be nearby, usually preceding the pronoun. The pronoun must match the noun in three ways—*person*, *number*, and *case*.

A pronoun has to match the noun (person).

The pronoun and the noun have to match:

I [this author] type rapidly.

*You are **the reader**, learning about pronouns.*

*John Almy told us **he** loved to read as a child.*

*Ms. Mello said **she** will not take late work.*

*Tom loves **airplanes** because **they** are complex, beautiful machines.*

This is called the *person* of the pronoun. (First person is designated by *I* and *we*. Second person is designated by *you*. And third person is designated by *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they*.)

Pronouns are singular or plural (number).

You must use a singular pronoun to refer to a singular noun:

***She** [Ms. Mello] said to give the homework to **her**.*

You must use a plural pronoun to refer to a plural noun:

***Tom** not only admires **airplanes**, **he** flies **them**, too.*

Non-count nouns use singular pronouns:

*I poured **milk** = I poured **it**.*

*We bought new **furniture**=We bought **it**.*

This is called the *number* (singular or plural) of the pronoun.

Pronouns are either subjects or objects (case).

Only subject pronouns can be subjects:

***We** have the same math class.*

***They** want to meet for lunch.*

***Who** will drive?*

Other personal subject pronouns: *I, we, you, he, she, it, they, who, whoever...*

Object pronouns can be direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of a preposition. They cannot be subjects:

*They gathered rocks and threw **them** in the surf.*

*He gave **me** his notes.*

*They threw the rocks at **us**.*

Other personal object pronouns: *me, us, you, him, her, it, them, whom, whomever...*

This is called the *case* (subjective or objective) of the pronoun.

Relative pronouns begin relative clauses.

A relative pronoun introduces a clause that contains a subject-verb pair. (The relative pronoun itself is usually the subject of the relative clause.) The relative pronoun refers to a noun in the preceding clause. Tip: Use *who* for a person, *that* for a person or thing, and *which* for a thing.

*Robert is the **tutor who** is in my English 1B class.*

*Kyra is the **one that** drives a Prius.*

*History is the **class that** is his favorite.*

*My next class is **history, which** is my favorite.*

Other relative pronouns: *who, whoever, whomever, whose, what.*

Demonstrative pronouns are specific

A demonstrative pronoun is like a pointer, pointing at a specific noun. It actually functions as an adjective:

***This class** is my favorite.*

*Can you give me **those notes**?*

But a demonstrative pronoun can also *replace* the noun (the usual job of a pronoun):

***This** is my favorite.*

*Can you give me **those**?*

Other demonstrative pronouns: *that, these.*

Indefinite pronouns are tricky

Think about it—*everyone* means “every single one”—it’s singular. *Everybody* means “every single body,” singular (—not “everybodies,” which would be plural if it were a real word, which it isn’t).

These pronouns are singular: *Anyone, anybody, anything, no one, nobody, nothing, someone, somebody, something, everyone, everybody, everything, either, each, another, one.* If you use one of these singular pronouns as the subject of a sentence, you must use a verb that matches a singular subject.

***Everybody** (every single body) **knows** that.*

These pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, several.* If you use one of these plural pronouns as the subject of a sentence, you must use a verb that matches a plural subject.

*A **few were** missing.*

Some indefinite pronouns can go either way, depending on whether they refer to count or non-count nouns:

***All** of the books **are** in the trunk of my car. (Books is a count noun, so all is plural.)*

***All** of the milk **is** gone. (Milk is a non-count noun, so all is singular.)*

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