

Pronouns

Pronouns are used as substitutes for nouns and noun phrases within a specific context. The pronoun usually comes after the noun subject, which is called the **antecedent**. The pronoun must match the noun in three ways—*person*, *number*, and *case*.

Pronouns and Person

A pronoun references one or more people named earlier. They can reference first, second, or third person. The first person is designated by *I* and *we*. The second person is designated by *you*. The third person is designated by *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they*.

Examples:

John is writing an essay; he types very fast.

Danny and Jim are attending a concert that they have long anticipated.

Jane and I published a paper together. We will be recognized at a ceremony tonight.

Professor Harrison said that she does not accept late work.

Pronouns and Number

We typically use singular pronouns to refer to singular and noncount nouns and plural pronouns to refer to plural nouns.

Examples of singular and noncount nouns:

Did Mike get the milk? He drinks it by the gallon.

We bought new furniture from IKEA because it is cheaper there.

Sally says that she likes eating soup because it is nutritious.

Examples of plural nouns:

Do you see all those trees? They are evergreens!

Jane and I published a paper together. We will be recognized at a ceremony tonight.

Exceptions:

There are exceptions to these rules, however. According to [MLA style guidelines](#), writers may use “a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or

irrelevant to the context.” Some people use the pronoun they. In such instances, the recently accepted reflective pronoun *themselves* may also be used for a singular noun.

Examples of Exceptions:

Malcom said that they are going to the show by themselves.

It is best to ask someone else what they think of your essay.

A student should major in what they are passionate about.

Pronouns and Case

Only subject pronouns can be subjects. Object pronouns cannot be subjects but must act as a direct object, indirect object or object of a preposition.

Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns
I	Me
We	Us
He	Him
She	Her
They	Them
Who	Whom
It	It
You	You

Examples:

They want to meet for dinner tonight.

Who will drive?

Give me the notes.

To whom will you send the letter?

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun renames the noun that comes right before it and introduces a dependent (relative) clause, requiring the subject of the independent clause to take another verb. Relative pronouns include *who*, *whoever*, *whom*, *whomever*, *that*, and *which*.

Examples:

Movies [that have a surprise ending] are my favorite.

The girl [who sits behind me] is annoying.

I enjoy my college major, [which promises great opportunities].

Demonstrative Pronouns

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

Examples:

This lipstick is my favorite.

Can you hand me those shoes?

That dog is sure ugly.

A demonstrative pronoun can also *replace* the noun (the usual job of a pronoun), but only when context is given or implied:

Examples:

Those look better.

Can you hand me that?

Indefinite Pronouns

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

Example:

Everybody knows that.

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

Example:

Several were missing from the box.

Some indefinite pronouns can be either single or plural, depending on whether the nouns that follow them are single or plural.

Examples:

Some of my *money* has been lost.

Some of our *students* have been absent.

None of the *food* is left on the plate.

None of the *students* are on campus.