

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.

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.

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.

Only subject pronouns can be subjects:

We have the same math class.

They want to meet for lunch.

Who will drive?

Other 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 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. (In this case, *that* refers to the pronoun *one*, which in turn refers to a noun, *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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