

Pronouns

What do pronouns do anyway?

Pronouns rename a noun. Writers use this grammar element when they wish to connect ideas without repeating the same words. Writers need to be wary of over using pronouns because, in academic prose, a pronoun should rename the closest noun.

Ex. Chris handed the puppy to Susan. (Original)

Ex. He handed the puppy to her.

<u>Pronoun Type</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Definitions</u>
Subjective I We You --- He/She/It They	Ex. Peter David wrote the novel <u>Imzadi</u> . Ex. He (Peter David) wrote the novel <u>Imzadi</u> .	Subjective: These pronouns rename the subject of the sentence.
Objective Me Us You --- Him/Her/It Them	Ex. The girls went to see <u>The Matrix</u> . Ex. The girls went to see it .	Objective: These pronouns rename the direct object of the sentence.
Possessive My Our Your --- His/Her/Its Their Mine Ours Yours --- His/Hers/Its Theirs	Ex. The politicians' views were unwelcome. Ex. Their views were unwelcome. Ex. Anna and I thought the movie belonged to us. Ex. Anna and I thought the movie was ours .	Possessive: These pronouns show ownership. Use the first set when the noun being renamed and the pronoun are beside one another. Use the second set when the pronoun and the noun being renamed are further apart in the sentence.
Compound Personal Pronouns Myself Ourselves Yourself --- Himself/ Them- Herself/ selves Itself	Ex. I will write the book alone. Ex. I will write the book myself . Ex. Are the children ok without you? Ex. Are the children ok by themselves ?	Compound Personal: These pronouns redirect the action of the verb to emphasize the subject.
Interrogative and Relative Pronouns Who/Whom Whoever/Wherever	Ex. John Donne, who wrote "Holy Sonnet 14," is one of my favorite poets. Ex. With whom are you going? Ex. Whoever answers this question correctly will win a prize. Ex. Give it to whomever .	Interrogative and Relative: These pronouns are used when asking questions or for referring to a noun in the main sentence. Use who or whoever when renaming the subject of a sentence, and use whom or whomever when renaming the direct object.

Using Pronouns in Writing

When using pronouns, writers need to make sure they do not change the meaning of the sentence. If a pronoun is renaming the wrong noun, readers will have trouble comprehending what the writer intends to say.

Original: Lynn Flewelling is the author of The Bone Doll's Twin. Tobin, the main character, is forced to hide her identity. The author completed the sequel Hidden Warrior in the summer of 2003.

Incorrect: Lynn Flewelling is the author of The Bone Doll's Twin. Tobin, the main character, is forced to hide her identity. She completed the sequel Hidden Warrior in the summer of 2003.

In the example, the writer used the pronoun to rename words "the author"; however, this decision made the writer's meaning unclear because the main character of the novel probably did not go on to write the second book in the series.

Pronouns and To Be

When using pronouns, be aware of the rule regarding the verb "to be." In sentences, this verb acts as an equals sign, and writers need to use subjective pronouns on both sides of the verb. This rule is falling out of style in speaking, but it is important to remember it when writing academic prose.

Original: What are you and Steve doing tonight?	Forms of "to be": I am	We are
Incorrect: What are you and him doing tonight?	You are	---
Correct: What are you and he doing tonight?	He/She/It is	They are

Who/Which/That

Many writers confuse these pronouns. In formal writing, writers should use "who" when they are renaming a person and want to draw attention to the individuality of the person. They should use "that" when renaming a person if they want to draw attention to the type or class of person. That can also be used to rename objects, places, and animals. That can cause further problems because writers can use the pronoun to introduce essential clauses. "Which" is used to introduce non-essential clauses. In informal writing, people often use "which" and "that" interchangeably.

Ex. She is the girl who one the contest. Ex. The conman is the type of person that should be in jail.
Ex. Give me the book that was on the table. Ex. Smith argues that the land in Virginia did not have an owner.
Ex. He is used to getting his way, which is not making our working together easier.

Whose/Who's

These words are easy to mix up. "Whose" is a possessive form of "who." "Who's" is a contraction of the words "who is."

Ex. Whose dog is barking? Ex. Whose pen is this? Ex. Who's at the door? Ex. Who's going to the party?

The Who/Whom Trick

Many people no longer make a distinction between "who" and "whom" because they consider "whom" archaic; however, in formal writing both need to be used. When deciding which one to use, remember the pronouns he/him or she/her. If writers ask themselves "who or whom" caught the ball, and they answer that she did. Then, they use "who." If they ask, with "who or whom" are you going, and they answer with him. They use whom. The trick does not always work, but it often helps you to decide which pronoun to use.

Sexist Language

As society acknowledges the equality of all genders, writers need to avoid sexist language to reflect this change. It is no longer appropriate to say that a doctor speaks to his patients because the doctor may be a woman. It would be better to write that a doctor speaks to his or her patients. When using his or her, be careful because the construction can make a paper sound awkward if a writer uses the combination too frequently. Another way to avoid the problem is to make the subject of the sentence plural, but then, remember to change the verb.

Ex. Doctors speak to their patients.