



### Pronouns and Case Errors

Case refers to the form a pronoun takes given its role in a sentence. Probably, the most frequent case errors occur in the use of who vs. whom, but there are other common examples.

In order to determine which form a pronoun should take (usually subjective or objective), you need to look at that pronoun's position in the sentence; however, if a pronoun is part of a smaller subordinate clause, then you are only concerned with its position in the clause and not in the sentence as a whole.

For example, in the following sentence, the final pronoun does not at first seem to be in the subject (or "first-person") position, but when you understand that the sentence ends with an implied subordinate clause, you will see that it does indeed take the role of the subject within the smaller subordinate clause, and that is the only one that matters when you are determining the case of a pronoun.

Error: "She is a better piano player than **me**."

Correction: "She is a better piano player than **I**." (*implied "than I am"*)

The final pronoun in this sentence is in the subject position ("first-person position"); therefore, the subjective case is required.

The same goes for who vs. whom:

Error: "That is the musician whom gave me the free tickets."

Correction: "That is the musician who gave me the free tickets."

In the underlined subordinate clause, "who" takes the subject position

	Singular	Plural	who vs. whom
Subjective Case	I, you, he/she/it	we, you, they/it	who
Objective Case	me, you, him/her/it	us, you, them	whom

- Use subjective case for the subject and for subject complement
- Use possessive case to show ownership
- Use objective case for direct object, indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Other things to remember:

- who, whose, and whom ordinarily refer to people; which refers to things, and that refers to either. Use whom for all pronouns used as objects in formal English.
- for multiple subjects use the subjective case; for multiple objects use the objective case.
- for appositives use the same case as the noun to which they refer.
- the subject of a verb in subordinate clause takes the subjective case, even when the whole clause is used as an object.
- use the possessive case immediately before a gerund.
- use the subjective case for the subject or object of an infinitive.