

English Home Language

Grade 9

Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronouns can be divided into numerous categories including:

- **Indefinite pronouns** – those referring to one or more unspecified objects, beings, or places, such as someone, anybody, nothing. Notice in the examples below that there is no set position for where an indefinite pronoun will appear in a sentence.

Indefinite pronoun examples:

1. Anyone
2. Somebody
3. Whichever
4. Whoever
5. Other
6. Something
7. Nobody

Indefinite pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- Would **anyone** like a coffee?
- Take **whatever** you like. Jamie took one cookie and Ben took the **other**.
- **Whoever** owns this is in big trouble! I want **someone to move this now**.

Indefinite pronouns can also be used to create sentences that are almost abstract. Examples could include: this, all, such and something.

- **All** was not lost.
- **Such** is life.
- **Something** tells me **this** won't end well.

- **Personal pronouns** – those associated with a certain person, thing, or group; all except you have distinct forms that indicate singular or plural number.
- Personal pronouns are always specific and are often used to replace a proper noun (someone's name) or a collective group of people or things.

- Personal pronouns have two main groups, one referring to the subject of the sentence and one to the object. The first is used to replace the subject of the sentence: I, you, he, she, it, we, you and they.
 - Jack and David are friends. **They** play basketball together.
 - I have more money than **he**
 - **We** will be late if **you** don't hurry up.

The second group of pronouns replaces the object of the sentence: me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them. Consider the sentence again: **We** will be late if **you** don't hurry up. In the above example, we is the subject of the sentence, but you is the object. Other examples of pronouns replacing the object:

- Peter sang the song to **me**.
- Missing the train will cause **us** to be late.

She packed **them** tightly in the suitcase.

- **Reflexive pronouns** – those preceded by the adverb, adjective, pronoun, or noun to which they refer, and ending in –self or –selves. Reflexive pronouns are used to refer back to the subject or clause of a sentence. The list of reflexive pronouns includes: Myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves. Reflexive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.
 - Count **yourselves**
 - Annie only had **herself** to blame.

Peter and Paul had baked **themselves** cakes.

- **Demonstrative pronouns** – those used to point to something specific within a sentence. There are only four demonstrative pronouns – this, that, these, those – but the usage can be a bit tricky at times.
- This and that are singular, whereas these and those are plural. As you may have noticed, there can be some crossover with indefinite pronouns when using this and that. Demonstrative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.
 - I prefer **this**.
 - **These** are beautiful, but **those** belong to Danny.
 - Did you see **that**?

While it can be confusing, **this**, **that**, **these** and **those** can sometimes be used as demonstrative adjectives. The difference between the two is that a demonstrative pronoun replaces the noun and a demonstrative adjective qualifies the noun. I prefer this photo. These flowers are beautiful, but those vases belong to Danny. Did you see that rainbow?

Possessive pronouns – those designating possession or ownership.

Examples include: mine, its, hers, his, yours, ours, theirs, whose.

Consider the example:

- This cat is **mine**.

Mine is indicating possession, that the cat belongs to me. Incidentally, this in the sentence is not a pronoun but demonstrative adjective as it qualifies the noun cat. You will find that possessive pronouns often follow phrases that contain demonstrative adjectives. Possessive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- Are these bananas **yours**?
- This money is **ours**.

Is the fault **theirs** or **yours**?

- **Relative pronouns** – those which refer to nouns mentioned previously, acting to introduce an adjective (relative) clause. They will usually appear after a noun to help clarify the sentence or give extra information.

Examples include: who, which, that, whom, whose. Consider the following sentence: The man whostole the car went to jail. The relative pronoun who acts to refer back to the noun man. It acts to open a clause by identifying the man as not just any man, but the one who stole the car. Relative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- The table, **which** sits in the hallway, is used for correspondence.
- The car **that** crashed into the wall was blue.
- This is the woman, **whose** key you found.
-

- **Interrogative pronouns** – Those which introduce a question. Examples include: who, whom, whose, what, which. We can usually identify an interrogative pronoun by the fact that they often appear at the

beginning of a question. Interrogative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- **Who** will come to the party?
- **Which** do you prefer?
- **What** do you need?
- **Whose** clothes are on the floor?
- **Whom** did you tell?

Whom and who are often confused, and even native speakers will use them incorrectly. Who will replace the subject of a sentence, whereas whom will replace the direct or indirect object. A good tip for deciding which to use is that you can replace who in the sentence with a personal pronoun and it will still make sense. Who will come to the party? I will come to the party. The same system would not work for Whom did you tell? I did you tell.

- **Reciprocal pronouns** – Those expressing mutual actions or relationship; i.e. one another. There are just two reciprocal pronouns in English: one another and each other.
 - The boxers punched **each other**

The couple love **one another** deeply
- **Intensive pronouns** – those ending in –self or –selves and that serve to emphasize their antecedents. These are almost identical to reflexive pronouns, but rather than just referring back to the subject of the sentence they work to reinforce the action. In many cases, the sentence would still make sense without the intensive pronoun. Intensive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- I will do it **myself**.
- We made this pie **ourselves**.
- A nation speaks for **itself** through elections.

Notice how the intensive pronoun is working to emphasize the statement. The sentence would still technically be correct without the intensive pronoun, but it adds some important context to its meaning.

Pronoun Rules

There are a few important rules for using pronouns. As you read through these rules and the examples in the next section, notice how the pronoun rules are followed. Soon you'll see that pronouns are easy to work with.

- Subject pronouns may be used to begin sentences. For example: We did a great job.
- Subject pronouns may also be used to rename the subject. For example: It was she who decided we should go to Hawaii.
- Indefinite pronouns don't have antecedents. They are capable of standing on their own. For example: No one likes the sound of fingernails on a chalkboard.
- Object pronouns are used as direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. These include: you, me, him, her, us, them, and it. For example: David talked to her about the mistake.
- Possessive pronouns show ownership. They do not need [apostrophes](#). For example: The cat washed its

Examples of Pronouns

In the following examples, the pronouns are italicized.

1. We are going on vacation.
2. Don't tell me that *you* can't go with us.
3. Anybody who says *it* won't be fun has no clue what they are talking about.
4. These are terribly steep stairs.
5. We ran into each other at the mall.
6. I'm not sure which is worse: rain or snow.

7. It is one of the nicest Italian restaurants in town.
8. Richard stared at himself in the mirror.
9. The laundry isn't going to do itself.
10. Someone spilled orange juice all over the countertop!