

# Pronouns

## WHAT IS A PRONOUN?

A pronoun is a word that refers to or takes the place of a noun. The noun being referred to is called the *antecedent*. The identity of the pronoun is made clear by the antecedent. For example:

The boy said that he was tired.

Antecedent                      Pronoun

In this example, the pronoun "he" is referring back to the noun (antecedent) "boy."

There are many different types of pronouns: *personal, possessive, reflexive, intensive, demonstrative, interrogative, relative, indefinite, and reciprocal*.

**Personal** Personal Pronouns are pronouns that refer to a specific person or thing in a sentence and can be divided into two groups: *nominative and objective*.

- **Nominative personal pronouns** can act as the subject of a sentence (I, you, he, she, it, we, they). For example:

I went to the store after work.

You should not go to class if you are sick.

- **Objective personal pronouns**, on the other hand, act as objects of a sentence (me, you, him, her, it, us, them). For example:

Alex came out with Joe and me.

Melissa really likes him.

**Possessive** Possessive Pronouns are pronouns that show ownership; in other words, something belongs to someone else (my/mine, your/yours, his, her/hers, its, our/ours, their/theirs). For example:

That book is mine.

Their shoes are under the bed.

**Reflexive** Reflexive Pronouns are pronouns that are used to show that the subject of the sentence is receiving the action of the verb (myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves). For example:

She can handle the situation herself.

We can write the paper ourselves.

<u>Personal</u> (Nominative)	<u>Personal</u> (Objective)	<u>Possessive</u>	<u>Reflexive</u>
I	me	my/mine	myself
you	you	your/yours	yourself
he	him	his	himself
she	her	her/hers	herself
it	it	its	itself
we	us	our/ours	ourselves
they	them	their/theirs	themselves

**Intensive** **Intensive Pronouns** are pronouns that are used only to place emphasis on the subject and are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Note: These pronouns look the same as reflexive pronouns, but they act differently in the sentence and are always placed next to the subject that they are emphasizing (myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves). For example:

**You yourself must go to the police station.**

\*Here, the pronoun “yourself” is used only to place emphasis on the subject “you” and does not change the meaning of the sentence.

**Demonstrative** **Demonstrative Pronouns** are pronouns that are used to identify nouns and answer the question “which one?” (this, that, these, those) For example:

**These are the books that John was talking about.**

\*Here, the pronoun “these” identifies which books John was talking about.

**Interrogative** **Interrogative Pronouns** are pronouns that are used only in reference to a question (who, what, which, whom, whose). For example:

**Which one of these pens is yours?**

**Who is that girl?**

**Relative** **Relative Pronouns** are pronouns that are used to connect clarifying information to nouns or other pronouns within a sentence (who, that, which, whom, whose, whoever, whichever, whomever, whatever).

### Who vs. Whom

**Who** is used when referring to a subject.

*Who went to the store after work?*

*Who sings this song?*

**Whom** is used when referring to an object.

*With whom did Alex go out?*

*The letter should be addressed to whom?*

Note: Refer back to the Personal Pronouns section on page 1 of this skills page. “Who” works like a nominative pronoun, while “whom” works like an objective pronoun.

## Who vs. That

**Who** is used to refer to people or animals with names.

*Liz, who wrote the review, got in trouble.*

**That** is used to refer to things.

*The paper that I wrote last night vanished.*

## That vs. Which

**That** is used in essential clauses (clauses necessary for understanding the subject of a sentence).

*The pizza parlor that is down the street from the college is great.*

\*The subject is unclear without the additional information. Which pizza parlor? *The one that is down the street from the college.*

**Which** is used in nonessential clauses (clauses unnecessary for understanding the subject of a sentence).

*My mom's jewelry was stolen, **which** upset her very much.*

\*The subject is clear without the additional information.

Note: For more information on essential and nonessential clauses, see the skills page on [Independent and Dependent Clauses](#).

**Indefinite** Indefinite Pronouns are pronouns that are used in reference to a person or thing that is not specific or not known. Indefinite pronouns are also used to identify a general group of people or things (i.e. everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, somebody, most, all, each every, some, none, one, few, both, many, several). For example:

**Everybody has to take the Writing Proficiency Examination in order to graduate.**  
**All of the seniors were excited for graduation.**

Note: Singular indefinite pronouns must always take singular verbs. For more information on indefinite pronouns, see the skills page on [Pronoun Antecedent Agreement](#).

**Reciprocal** Reciprocal Pronouns are pronouns that are used to refer to a mutual set of people (each other, each other's, one another, one another's). For example:

**We need to help one another survive.**  
**They had remembered each other's phone numbers.**

Note: It is also important to be clear when using pronouns. For example: *He* really should not do *that*. (Who is *he*? What is *that*?)

⇒ For more information, please refer to the skills page on [Pronoun Antecedent Agreement](#).