

# ENG 101 English Composition I: Pronouns and Antecedents

Pronouns replace the subject or object in a sentence or paragraph to avoid repetition or when you don't know a person's or object's proper name.

## 1. Personal Pronouns: Subjects and Objects

*Subject Pronouns:* I, you, he, she, it, they, we.

*He* needed to study hard to pass the exam.

Jamal ran along the sidewalk because *he* was late for school. *He* knew that *he* would get into trouble if *he* was late again.

*Object pronouns:* me, you, him, her, it, them, us:

I bought the bike and rode *it* home.

Give *it* to *her*!

## 2. Possessive Pronouns and Adjectives

*Possessive Pronouns:* mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs

*Possessive adjectives:* my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their

Note how the possessive pronouns are written. That's why we write:  
The dog ate *its* food then went to sleep on *its* bed.

But:

It's never too late to learn how to write well. ("It's" is the contraction of "It is").

## 3. Gender, Number, and Person

### Gender

female: she, her, hers

male: he, him, his

neuter: it, its

## Number

Singular: I, he, she, it, you, me, him, her, it, mine, yours, his, hers, my, your, his, her, its, your

Plural: they, we, us, them, you, yours, ours, theirs, our, your, their

## Person

*First person:* I, we, me, us

*Second person:* you, yours

*Third person:* he, she, it, they, them, his, hers, theirs, his, her, its, their

Note that there's not a distinct pronoun for every possible group, person or thing: for example, "they" can refer to a group of men, a group of women, a group of men and women, a group of objects; and there's no distinction between "you" singular and "you" plural. These distinctions are called *inflection*; English is somewhat inflected, but not nearly as much as many other languages (Navajo, Latin, Arabic–), and the inflection is slowly disappearing from the language, especially where pronouns are concerned.

## 4. Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Given that a pronoun stands in for a particular person, persons, or thing, the gender, number and person must agree with the noun or proper noun it replaces:

Jamal was a very good student. The teacher wished *she* was able to help *him* get to school on time more often; *she* knew that *he* had to help take care of *his* brothers and sisters. *They* were all younger than Jamal, and *their* mother had to go to work early. Jamal had ambitions to go to college and become a lawyer. The teacher knew *he* could do *it* and was very impressed by *his* determination and devotion to *his* family.

## 5. Exercises

Please fill in the correct pronoun, possessive pronoun or possessive adjective. And watch for punctuation.

1. The author Jane Smith lived in St. Paul, Minnesota. \_\_\_\_\_ had many famous neighbors.
2. Her first book was about fairy tales. \_\_\_\_\_ was for preschoolers.
3. The next two books were about family life. \_\_\_\_\_ were very realistic and true to life.
4. Her editor asked \_\_\_\_\_ to write another book about \_\_\_\_\_ experiences. \_\_\_\_\_ had to persuade \_\_\_\_\_ to do \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Bill enjoys reading westerns. The characters in \_\_\_\_\_ are generally cowboys and outlaws.
6. Movies are not always the same as the novels \_\_\_\_\_ based on. \_\_\_\_\_ are sometimes changed because \_\_\_\_\_ need more action in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Alice likes to drink tea. \_\_\_\_\_ likes \_\_\_\_\_ hot or cold.
8. Everybody knows that eating chocolate-broccoli muffins is a good way to get \_\_\_\_\_ vitamin C.
9. The troupe of knife jugglers shocked \_\_\_\_\_ audience when a small knife accidentally hurt one of \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Either the grill crew or the manager must give \_\_\_\_\_ permission for you to return that half-eaten double cheeseburger.
11. Both the computer monitor and the refrigerator door have \_\_\_\_\_ shiny surface smeared with dirty handprints from \_\_\_\_\_ grandkids.
12. The new laundry detergent restored Hector's mud-stained pants to \_\_\_\_\_ original condition.
13. After feeding several quarters into the gumball machine, a person learns that \_\_\_\_\_ have little chance of receiving the miniature camera in the display.
14. Ms. Carson, like all the other American literature teachers, \_\_\_\_\_ own interpretation of the symbols in Moby-Dick. (you need a verb as well as a pronoun).
15. A hospital cares for \_\_\_\_\_ patients as well as \_\_\_\_\_ can.
16. No matter how hard \_\_\_\_\_ searched, Maria could not find \_\_\_\_\_ briefcase.
17. Janet and Paula were upset when \_\_\_\_\_ prom dates did not arrive on time.
18. Neither the dogs nor the cat received \_\_\_\_\_ food tonight.
19. Julia decided that \_\_\_\_\_ could not handle five courses this semester.
20. Either President Trump or the senators will have to give \_\_\_\_\_ approval for the emergency measure to pass.