


3 Pronouns I: General



A **pronoun** is a word that is used instead of a noun that has already been mentioned or is already known.

1. Note that all nouns, whether common or proper, are replaced with *he*, *she*, *it* or *they*, depending on whether the *gender* of the noun you want to replace with a pronoun is *masculine*, *feminine*, *common* or *neuter* and whether the noun is *singular* or *plural* in number.

So, when you replace a noun with a pronoun, you must look at:

- (i) the gender of the noun

A noun of the masculine gender must be replaced with *he*.

A noun of the feminine gender must be replaced with *she*.

A noun of the neuter gender is usually replaced with *it*.

A noun of the common gender may be replaced with *he/she* as required.

- (ii) the number of the noun to be replaced—singular or plural

A singular noun must be replaced with a singular pronoun—*he/she/it*.

A plural noun must be replaced with a plural pronoun—*they*.

(a) Jeet said that Jeet had finished reading the book Jeet had bought last week.

(b) Salim and Karan were going home when Salim and Karan met Jeet.

The above sentences may be rewritten by using pronouns:

(c) Jeet said that he had finished reading the book he had bought last week.

(d) Salim and Karan were going home when they met Jeet.

The word *pronoun* comes from *pro* (Latin 'pro' = for) + noun.

2. Remember that since a pronoun is used instead of a noun that has already been mentioned or is already known, we must be careful in using a pronoun. Otherwise, there may be confusion.

For example:

(e) *Jeet told Salim that he had not been chosen to play for the school team.*

Usually, when a pronoun is used instead of a noun, the pronoun refers to the noun last mentioned. So, in (e) *he* should refer to Salim. But, even then, some confusion remains, for we are not sure who *he* refers to: *Jeet* or *Salim*.

You must not write sentences like this. Where necessary, you must use a noun again to make it absolutely clear as to what you want to say. So, depending on who *he* refers to in (e), the sentence should read:

(f) *Jeet told Salim that Jeet had not been chosen to play for the school team.*

or

(g) *Jeet told Salim that Salim had not been chosen to play for the school team.*

3. When we want to use a pronoun instead of a noun in a sentence, we sometimes have to replace not only the noun, but other words as well:

(h) *Vinod took out his book and started reading the book.*

When we rewrite the sentence using a pronoun, we get:

(i) *Vinod took out his book and started reading it.*

The pronoun *it* has replaced two words: *the book*, that is, not only a noun (*book*), but also the definite article, *the*.

Take another example:

(j) *Once Hari and Govinda were great friends, but now Hari and Govinda do not speak to each other.*

Rewritten, this sentence becomes:

(k) *Once Hari and Govinda were great friends, but now they do not speak to each other.*

The pronoun *they* has replaced three words: *Hari and Govinda*, that is, two proper nouns (*Hari, Govinda*) and the conjunction, *and*.

It is clear, therefore, that sometimes in replacing nouns with pronouns, we have to leave out other words as well. A sentence thus becomes simpler and shorter.



*Rewrite each of the following sentences, replacing a **noun** with a **pronoun** wherever possible. One has been done for you.*

1. The man looked at me and the man smiled.

*The man looked at me and **he** smiled.*.....



2. Rima looked at the hill in the distance. Rima wanted to climb the hill.
3. The teacher told her students that the students must listen carefully to what the teacher told the students.
4. Sohrab was Rustum's son, but Sohrab and Rustum had never met.
5. Jim wanted to play and so Jim looked for his bat and ball.
6. When Jim was walking down the road, a boy waved to Jim from the other side of the road, but Jim could not remember where Jim had met that boy before.
7. Arjun must not tease the dog, because the dog might bite Arjun.
8. Gaurav and Saurav are brothers. Gaurav and Saurav fight with each other all the time.
9. Once upon a time, a man and his wife lived near the sea. The man and his wife were very poor. The man went out fishing in the sea every day, but the man seldom caught any fish.
10. The bird flew to its nest. The bird wanted to feed its young.
11. Ali Baba followed the robbers to the cave. Ali Baba saw the robbers enter the cave. Ali Baba knew that the robbers hid all that the robbers had stolen in the cave.
12. The apples on the tree were ripe. Jaya picked one and took a bite, but Jaya found the apple very sour.
13. The passengers of the train complained that the train always ran late and so, the passengers had decided that the passengers would write a letter to the newspapers about it.
14. The crowd shouted and booed. The crowd wanted the home team to win.
15. Ravi was sleeping. Karan came and woke Ravi up. Karan and Ravi went out to play.

