



WHO VS. WHOM: A SIMPLE WAY TO DETERMINE WHICH WORD TO USE

Written by Scribendi

When it comes to misunderstood words, the award for Most Confusing Pronouns definitely goes to *who* vs. *whom*.

Although they are the bane of both native and non-native English writers who believe that *whom* is simply an archaic and out-of-fashion form of *who*, both words do have their grammatically correct place in the English language.

The Quick Answer: When to Use *Who* and *Whom*

A quick way to decide between *who* vs. *whom* is to learn the following rule:

If a question can be answered with *him*, the pronoun *whom* is correct—just remember that both words end with an *-m*!

- To whom are you singing?
- I'm singing to him.

If the question can be answered with *he*, the pronoun *who* is correct—here, remember that both these words end with a vowel.

- Who went to the dog park?
- He went to the dog park.

"But what if a woman is performing an action?" you ask.
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First, way to be vigilant about calling out gender inequality.

✓ Okay, Got It

Second, no need to worry! This mnemonic device simply utilizes the male pronouns *him* and *he* to help you determine whether to use *who* vs. *whom*. Once you know which word to use in the question, you can substitute the appropriate pronoun in the answer.

A Closer Look: The Difference between *Who* and *Whom*

1. When to Use *Who*

To understand the difference between *who* and *whom*, you must first understand the difference between the subject and object of a sentence. The subject is the person a sentence is about or the person completing an action. When you refer to the subject of a sentence, use the pronoun *who*. Here are some examples:

- Who is going to the cottage with us?
- Who is the best wizard at Hogwarts?
- Who brought the puppy to work?

In these sentences, *who* is the subject, because *who* is completing the actions (i.e., going to the cottage, being the best wizard, and bringing the puppy). Any person's name could be filled in here (e.g., Daphne is going to the cottage, or Kevin is the best wizard), and this person is the sentence's subject, making *who* the appropriate interrogative pronoun to use in this context.

2. When to Use *Whom*

Meanwhile, the object of a sentence is the person to whom the actions of the verb are being done (or, to put it another way, the person receiving the actions of the verb):

- Whom did she invite?
- Whom do you love?
- Whom are you going to beat in the dance-off?

In this context, *whom* can be substituted with the person receiving the action (e.g., she invited Joey to the party, or I love my mom).

Occasionally, the prepositions *for*, *to*, *by*, *with*, and *about* may need to be used with *whom* to ensure the sentence makes sense:

- With whom are you going to the pub?
- For whom are you making these cupcakes?
- This was painted by whom?

Parting Advice

Just remember our quick tip, and you'll never have trouble deciding between *who* vs. *whom* again. Cement your knowledge with our article on pronouns

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