

Definition:

A pronoun is a word that can replace a noun or noun phrase in a sentence. We use them to refer either to a noun that has already been said or to a noun that does not need to be named specifically. There are several types of pronouns that we need to use depending on the context of the sentence.

Using pronouns

We commonly use pronouns in speech and writing to avoid sounding unnatural and repetitive by reusing the same noun in a sentence multiple times. Take, for example, the following sentence: • “John said that John wants to use the computer that belongs to John.” The sentence is awkward because John is repeated so many times. Instead, we can use personal pronouns to stand in for the name of the antecedent to make the sentence sound more natural, as in: • “John said that he wants to use the computer that belongs to him.” In addition to making the sentence sound better, the pronouns provide specific information, telling us that John is in the third person. If the sentence were in the first person, it would read: • “I said that I want to use the computer that belongs to me.” (We never use our own names when we talk about what we’re doing in the first person, so we use the personal pronoun I instead of an antecedent.) As we can see in the examples above, the pronouns are all serving the same function as nouns. They can be the subject of a sentence or clause, the object of a verb, or they can follow linking verbs to rename or re-identify the subject (known as a subject complement).

Different types of pronouns

1. Personal pronouns

You may be familiar with the most common types of pronouns: personal pronouns. There are three types of these:

- First person: the person speaking*
- Second person: the person being spoken to*

- *Third person: other people or things*

*Similar to nouns, personal pronouns can act as the **subject** of a verb: For example, ‘I like Musa*

*Or they can be the **object** of a verb or preposition. For example ‘Musa likes **me**’.*

See the table below for the different forms:

Subject pronouns		
	singular	plural
First person	I	We
Second person	You	You
Third person	He, she, it	They

Object pronouns		
	singular	plural
First person	Me	Us
Second person	You	You
Third person	Him, her, it	Them

While they are called ‘personal pronouns’, they aren’t limited to people and can also refer to animals and objects. For these things, we typically use the pronoun ‘it’.

2. Possessive pronouns

*If you are **asking**, the question ‘what is a possessive pronoun? It’s how we refer to things that belong to someone.*

While we use a possessive pronoun to replace noun in a sentence, we use a possessive adjective to describe a noun.

Subject pronoun	Possessive pronoun	Possessive adjective
I	Mine	My
You	Yours	Your
He/She/It	His/Hers/Its	His/Her/Its
We	Ours	Our
You	Yours	Your
They	Theirs	Their
It	Its	It

Possessive pronoun:

- *Kate is a good friend of **mine**.*
- *It's **his** phone.*
- *What's **mine** is **yours**.*

Possessive adjective:

- *My house is bigger than **your** house.*
- ***Her** phone is new.*
- ***Our** car is red.*

3. Reflexive pronouns

*Reflexive pronouns are words ending in -self or -selves. We use them when the **subject** and the **object** of a sentence are the same. For example, 'I believe in **myself**'.*

There are nine English reflexive pronouns in total. They are:

Personal pronoun	Reflexive pronoun
I	Myself
One	Oneself
You	Yourself
Him	Himself
Her	Herself
It	Itself
Us	Ourselves
You	Yourselves
They	Themselves

It's important to **bear in mind** that they can be used as both direct objects or indirect objects.

Direct object

A direct object is what received the action of the verb.

We can use a reflexive pronoun as a direct object when the subject and the direct object are the same.

Beth decided to treat **herself** to a new outfit.

"Herself" is the object that receives the action of the verb.

Here, 'Beth' is both the subject and object of 'treat' in the second sentence so a reflexive pronoun is used.

Indirect object

An indirect object is the word or phrase that is given the direct object.

We can also use reflexive pronouns as indirect objects. This is when the indirect object is the same as the subject.

Dan poured **himself** a glass of water.

The glass of water is the object, "himself" is the indirect object that receives the object.

It would sound **odd** to say 'Fanta poured Musa a glass of water'. It's best in this case to use the reflexive pronoun.

Indefinite pronouns

An indefinite pronoun refers to a person, thing or place without being specific. Here are some of the most commonly used indefinite pronouns:

	People	Things	Places
some-	someone somebody	something	somewhere
any-	anyone anybody	anything	anywhere
no-	no-one nobody	nothing	nowhere
every-	everyone everybody	everything	everywhere

Like other pronouns, these are used as a replacement for a noun or noun phrase in a sentence.

- *Is this **anybody's** coat?*
- *They were staying in **somebody's** house while they were on holiday.*
- ***Nothing** happened.*

We can use 'else' after indefinite pronouns to refer to other people and things. For instance:

- *I think this is **somebody else's** jacket.*

5. Demonstrative pronouns

Pronouns that are used to refer to a specific thing or things are called demonstrative pronouns. We use different demonstrative pronouns depending on how near or far in distance or time the thing is. See the table below:

	Near	Far
Singular	this	that
Plural	these	those

Check out these examples to see how they work in a sentence:

- **This** meal tastes delicious.
- That house over **there** is huge!
- Can you pass me **those** gloves please?
- I need to finish reading **these** books before starting **those**.

Note: These words become demonstrative adjectives when they modify nouns or pronouns. For instance:

- **This** mobile phone.
- **Those** children.
- **That** suitcase.

6. Interrogative pronouns

*The most common interrogative pronouns are: **what, who, whom, whose and which**. Yet, we can also use longer form ones ending in **-ever**: **whoever, whomever, whosoever, whatever and whichever**.*

All of these pronouns can be used as singular or plural words depending on what they're being used to refer to.

Check out the table below for explanations.

Interrogative pronoun	When to use it
Who and whom	We use these to ask questions where the answer is typically a person. 'Who' is a subject, while 'whom' is an object'.
Whose	We use this to ask questions about possessions and ownership.
What	We use this to ask questions where the answer is typically an object or abstract concept.
Which	We use this to ask questions where the answer may have multiple choices or possibilities.

Relative Pronouns :

Relative pronouns are used to connect relative clauses (also known as adjective clauses) to the main clause in a sentence. Relative clauses either help clarify the antecedent with essential information (in which case they are known as restrictive clauses), or else give extra, nonessential information about it (in which case they are known as non-restrictive clauses). In a relative clause, the relative pronoun functions in one of three ways: as the subject of the clause, as the object of the clause's verb, or as a possessive determiner.

For example:

- *“There’s the woman who always sits next to me on the bus.” (Restrictive clause; who functions as the subject)*
- *“The book that I wrote is being published in January.” (Restrictive clause; that functions as the object of wrote)*
- *“The escaped giraffe, which had been on the loose for weeks, was finally captured.” (Non-restrictive clause; which functions as the subject)*
- *“The person, whose name can’t be revealed, appeared in court today.” (Nonrestrictive clause; whose functions as a possessive determiner, modifying name).*

Reciprocal pronouns:

We use reciprocal pronouns when two or more people both act as the subject of a verb, and both (or all) individually and equally receive the verb’s action. They can be the object of either the verb itself or a preposition used to complete the verb’s meaning. There are two reciprocal pronouns—each other (traditionally used for two people) and one another (traditionally used for more than two people).

For example:

- *“Jake and I call each other every day.”*
- *“My neighbors and I spent a lot of time at each other’s houses when we were kids.”*

Dummy Pronouns: *“Dummy” pronouns (more technically known as expletive pronouns) are words that function grammatically as pronouns but do not have antecedents— that is, they do not replace a noun, phrase, or clause. They refer to nothing in particular, instead helping the sentence to function properly in a grammatical context. There are two dummy pronouns, there and it.*

- *“There is a ship in the harbor.”*
- *“There were flowers in the meadow.”*
- *“It looks like it may snow tonight.”*
- *“Could you tell me what time it is?”*