

# You.

## Keith Murray - File sharing & creative collaboration



Description: -

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### You

Originally, the pair ye and you was used along with thee and thou to refer to people in the second person, ye and you for plural and thee and thou for singular. The chances are, however, that most changes they bring about will not be rapid. By about the middle of the 16th century the contrast in function between ye and you began breaking down, with the effect that you was more frequently used as a subject pronoun as use of ye decreased.

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When the second person plural was used as a grammatical subject, ye was used. Once this usage of the polite plural began, it gradually grew.

### You

Special plural forms were later contrived to hold you chiefly to singular use, such as , you-uns, yez, and. You began as the grammatical object, used in the following ways: I can see you. Queen Elizabeth I seems to have used only you in writing, and a user of her prestige must have given you a boost.

### You

So the simple social drive of good manners has in a few centuries completely remade the second person pronoun in English. These uses are known respectively as the accusative and dative cases. This is where social forces came into play: once people begin such a use, it must grow, since people would rather be polite than risk offending others in cases of doubt.

### You

The singular for this use would be thou: How great thou art. Initially, the distinction between singular you and plural you was signaled by verb agreement; you was for the singular continued in polite if informal use well into the 18th century before it lost respectability. This use is called the nominative case.



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