



PRONOUN EXPLANATION SHEET All There Is to Know about Pronouns

◆ A pronoun can be identified by knowing its definition or by memorizing a list.

1. Definition: A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence.

Sometimes these words can serve as adjectives—if they describe (modify) nouns.

One dog barked. (adjective) Some people ate lunch. (adjective)

One of you is sick. (pronoun) Some of us went home early. (pronoun)

He ate one and got sick. (pronoun) We had food; Tim wanted some. (pronoun)

Neither boy liked it. (adjective) This book is mine (adjective)

Neither of us liked it. (pronoun) This is not mine. (pronoun)

Which car is yours? (adjective) What month is it? (adjective)

Which is your car? (pronoun) What is your name? (pronoun)

2. Memorization: Learn these five categories and the words that go with them.

Subject Pronouns
(Nominative Case)

I

you

he, she, it

we

you

they

Indefinite Pronouns

anybody

everybody

nobody

somebody

Object Pronouns
(Objective Case)

me

you

him, her, it

us

you

them

Possessive Pronouns
(Possessive Case)

my, mine

your, yours

his, her, hers, its

our, ours

your, yours

their, theirs

Interrogative Pronouns

what (see above)

which (see above)

who, whom

whose (see above)

◆ Pronoun **antecedents**

1. **Antecedent** is a word we use to refer to the noun or pronoun that is being replaced by a pronoun earlier in a sentence or earlier in a paragraph. (In the paragraph below, the italicized words are antecedents for the underlined pronouns.)

John left his *assignment* at school. When he went back for it, he found the *door* locked. Although the janitor had a key for it, it still did not open. He had to go back home to his *parents*. They were upset that he couldn't get the assignment

2. When you write stories or factual information, always make sure that all pronouns have clearly understood antecedents. Don't begin written answers with pronouns. Always begin with the name of the person or thing you are talking about.

◆ Pronoun agreement

1. It is important to be consistent in number when using pronouns. The pronoun should represent the same number (singular/plural) as its antecedent.
 - Wrong: A good teacher should listen to their students.
 - Wrong: Good teachers should listen to his/her students.
 - Right: A good teacher should listen to his or her students.
 - Right: Good teachers listen to their students.
2. Using indefinite pronouns correctly can be a challenge: the words are always singular; therefore, the word referring back to them must be third person singular.
 - Wrong: Everyone did their work.
 - Wrong: No one did their assignments.
 - Right: Everyone did his or her work.
 - Right: No one did his or her work.

◆ Pronoun usage

One of the biggest problems with pronouns is being able to use them correctly in both oral and written language. They can be easier if you just slow down and think carefully. Below are some of the rules that guide our use of pronouns. In many cases you may rely on sound, but there are lots of times when the correct answer might not sound right to you. When a pronoun is joined with a conjunction like *and*, don't get fooled. Just pretend the other word is not there. Which pronoun would you use then? That will be the correct one to use even if there are lots of other items being joined with *and*.

1. Use a *subject* pronoun when you want to use it as the subject of a sentence.

Mr. Smith and (me,I) went away.
(Us, We) boys like soccer.
2. Use an *object* pronoun when you want to use it after a verb or after a preposition. (a direct, or indirect object)

He gave it to John and (me, I).
Ken hit Tim and (me, I) hard.
They took (us, we) boys away.
3. When making a comparison use a *subject* pronoun. You are actually leaving out part of the sentence. If you add the missing word, you will hear it does sound right.

Mark is taller than (he, him). [is]
I run as fast as (her, she). [does]
Ken is faster than Ken and (me,I) [am]
4. After *am, is, are, was, were, been* use a *subject* pronoun. This situation will not sound right, but it is correct! These are what are called predicate (pro)nouns.

It was (me, I) who did it.
It couldn't have been (he, him).