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## CAG 6

### PRONOUNS

A **pronoun** is a word that replaces a noun in a sentence. Pronouns are used to avoid repeating the same nouns over and over again. For example, “Vishal ran so fast, you’d think his life was on the line.” The pronoun “his” saved us from repeating the name Vishal again.

Common pronouns include **I, me, mine, she, he, it, we, and us**. In truth, there are many different types of pronouns, each serving a different purpose.

#### Personal Pronouns

**Personal pronouns** are used as a substitute for a person’s name. There are two kinds: **subjective and objective** pronouns. That is, they either act as the subject of the sentence or the object of the sentence.

As the **subject of a sentence**, they are:

- I
- you
- he
- she
- it
- we
- they

For example:



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- They went to the store.
  - I don't want to leave.
  - He runs a big shop in town.
  - You can't leave, either.

As the **object of the sentence**, they are:

- me
- you
- her
- him
- it
- us
- them

For example:

- Please don't sit beside me.
- Go talk to her.
- Seema put the gift under it.
- Don't look at them.

## **Possessive Pronouns**

**Possessive pronouns** show ownership or possession of a noun. They are:

- my



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- our
  - your
  - his
  - her
  - its (note there is no apostrophe)
  - their

For example:

- Is that my book?
- No, that's his book.
- That's its shelf.
- I'd like to see their bookshelves.

However, there are also independent possessive pronouns. These pronouns refer to a previously named or understood noun. They stand alone and aren't followed by any other noun. They are:

- mine
- ours
- yours
- his
- hers
- its
- theirs

For example:

- That's mine.
- Wrong. It's ours.



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- So, I suppose those clothes are yours?
  - No, it's theirs.

## Indefinite Pronouns

**Indefinite pronouns** don't point to particular nouns. We use them when an object doesn't need to be specifically identified. As such, it can remain indefinite. They include:

- few
- everyone
- all
- some
- anything
- nobody

For example:

- Most wealth is held by a select few.
- Everyone is here already.
- I don't have any paper napkins. Can you bring some?
- He's nobody.

## Relative Pronouns

**Relative pronouns** are used to connect a clause or phrase to a noun or pronoun. We often see them when we need to add more information. They are:



- who
- whom
- which
- whoever
- whomever
- whichever
- that

For example:

- The driver who ran the stop sign was careless.
- I don't know which pair of shoes you want.
- Take whichever ones you want.
- No, not that one.



## Intensive Pronouns

**Intensive pronouns** emphasize, or intensify, nouns and pronouns. Typically, we find them right after the noun they're intensifying. These pronouns typically end in -self or -selves.

They are:

- myself
- himself
- herself
- themselves
- itself
- yourself
- yourselves



- ourselves

For example:

- I myself like to travel.
- He himself is his worst critic.
- They approved the marriage themselves.
- We went to hear Mr. Rai himself speak.

## Demonstrative Pronouns

**Demonstrative pronouns** take the place of a noun that's already been mentioned. They can be singular or plural. There are five of them. They include:

- these
- those
- this
- that
- such

For example:

- These are nice.
- Those are warm drinks.
- Don't drink this.
- Such was his understanding.

## Interrogative Pronouns



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**Interrogative pronouns** do just what they say. They work in sentences that are posing a question. They are:

- who
- whom
- which
- what
- whoever
- whomever
- whichever
- whatever

For example:

- Who is going to arrive first?
- What are you bringing to the party?
- Which of these do you like better?
- Whatever do you mean?

## **Reflexive Pronouns**

**Reflexive pronouns** are similar to intensive pronouns. The difference between the two is that intensive pronouns aren't essential to a sentence's meaning. Meanwhile, reflexive pronouns are. Also, they're used when the subject and the object of a sentence refer to the same person or thing. These pronouns end in -self or -selves. They are:

- myself
- yourself
- himself



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- herself
  - itself
  - ourselves
  - yourselves
  - themselves

For example:

- I told myself not to spend all my money on new shoes.
- You're going to have to drive yourself to the restaurant today.
- We gave ourselves plenty of extra time.
- They bought themselves a new car.

## FEW PRONOUNS RULES TO FOLLOW

**Rule 1.** Subject pronouns are used when the pronoun is the subject of the sentence. You can remember subject pronouns easily by filling in the blank subject space for a simple sentence.

Example: \_\_\_ did the job.

I, he, she, we, they, who, whoever, etc., all qualify and are, therefore, subject pronouns.

**Rule 2.** Subject pronouns are also used if they rename the subject. They will follow the “to be” verbs, such as is, are, was, were, am, will be, had been, etc.

Examples:

- It is he.
- This is she speaking.
- It is we who are responsible for the decision to downsize.





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In informal English, most people tend to follow “to be” verbs with object pronouns like me, her, them. Many English scholars tolerate this distinction between formal and casual English.

- Example: **It could have been them.**

**Technically correct:** It could have been they.

- Example: **It is just me at the door.**

**Technically correct:** It is just I at the door.

**Rule 3.** This rule surprises even language watchers: when who refers to a personal pronoun (I, you, he, she, we, they), it takes the verb that agrees with that pronoun.

**Correct:** It is I who am sorry. (I am)

**Incorrect:** It is I who is sorry.

**Correct:** It is you who are mistaken. (you are)

**Incorrect:** It is you who's mistaken.

**Rule 4.** In addition to subject pronouns, there are also object pronouns, known more specifically as direct object, indirect object, and object of a preposition . Object pronouns include me, him, herself, us, them, themselves.

Examples:

- **Jean saw him.**



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**Him** is the direct object of the verb saw.

- **Give her the book.**

The direct object of give is **book**, and **her** is the indirect object. Indirect objects always have an implied to or for in front of them: Give [to] her the book.  
Do [for] me a favor.

- **Are you talking to me?**  
**Me** is the object of the preposition to.

**Rule 5.** The pronouns who, that, and which become singular or plural depending on the subject. If the subject is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.

Example:

- **He is the only one of those men who is always on time.**  
The word who refers to one. Therefore, use the singular verb “is”.

Sometimes we must look more closely to find a verb's true subject:

Example:

- **He is one of those men who are always on time.**  
The word who refers to men. Therefore, use the plural verb “are”.



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In sentences like this last example, many would mistakenly insist that one is the subject, requiring is always on time. But look at it this way: Of those men who are always on time, he is one.

**Rule 6.** Pronouns that are singular (I, he, she, everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, no one, nobody, someone, somebody, each, either, neither, etc.) require singular verbs. This rule is frequently overlooked when using the pronouns each, either, and neither, followed by of. Those three pronouns always take singular verbs. Do not be misled by what follows of.

Examples:

- **Each** of the girls **sings** well.
- **Either** of us **is** capable of doing the job.
- **Neither** of them **is** available to speak right now.

**Exception:** When each follows a noun or pronoun in certain sentences, even experienced writers sometimes get tripped up:

- **Incorrect:** The women each gave her approval.
- **Correct:** The women each gave their approval.
- **Incorrect:** The words are and there each ends with a silent vowel.
- **Correct:** The words are and there each end with a silent vowel.



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**Rule 7.** To decide whether to use the subject or object pronoun after the words **than or as**, mentally complete the sentence.

Examples:

- **Reema is as smart as she/her.**

If we mentally complete the sentence, we would say Reema is as smart as she is. Therefore, she is the correct answer.

- **Zoe is taller than I/me.**

Mentally completing the sentence, we have Zoe is taller than I am.

- **Kiran would rather talk to her than I/me.**

We can interpret this sentence in two ways: Kiran would rather talk to her than to me. OR Kiran would rather talk to her than I would. A sentence's meaning can change considerably, depending on the pronoun you choose.

**Rule 8.** The possessive pronouns yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs, and whose never need apostrophes. Please avoid mistakes like her's and your's.

**Rule 9.** The only time it's has an apostrophe is when it is a **contraction for it is or it has**. The only time who's has an apostrophe is when it means **who is or who has**. There is no apostrophe in oneself. Avoid "one's self," a common error.

Examples:

- It's been a cold morning.
- The thermometer reached its highest reading.
- He's the one who's always on time.



- He's the one whose wife is always on time.
- Keeping oneself ready is important.

**Rule 10.** Pronouns that end in -self or -selves are called reflexive pronouns. There are nine reflexive pronouns: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself, ourselves, yourselves, and themselves.

Reflexive pronouns are used when both the subject and the object of a verb are the same person or thing.

**Example:** Joe helped himself.

If the object of a preposition refers to a previous noun or pronoun, use a reflexive pronoun:

**Example:** Joe bought it for himself.

Reflexive pronouns help avoid confusion and nonsense. Without them, we might be stuck with sentences like Joe helped Joe.

**Correct:** I worked myself to the bone.

The object myself is the same person as the subject I, performing the act of working.

**Incorrect:** My brother and myself did it.

**Correct:** My brother and I did it.

Don't use myself unless the pronoun I or me precedes it in the sentence.

**Incorrect:** Please give it to John or myself.

**Correct:** Please give it to John or me.

**Correct:** You saw me being myself.



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Myself refers back to me in the act of being.

A sentence like Help yourself looks like an exception to the rule until we realize it's shorthand for You may help yourself.

In certain cases, a reflexive pronoun may come first.

**Example:** Doubting himself, the man proceeded cautiously.

Reflexive pronouns are also used for emphasis.

**Example:** He himself finished the whole job.

**Rule 11.** The use of they and their with singular pronouns is frowned upon by many traditionalists. To be consistent, it is a good practice to try to avoid they and its variants (e.g., them, their, themselves) with previously singular nouns or pronouns.

**Not consistent:** Someone has to do it, and they have to do it well.

The problem is that someone is singular, but they is plural. If we change they to he or she, we get a rather clumsy sentence, even if it is technically correct.

**Technically correct:** Someone has to do it, and he or she has to do it well.

Replacing an inconsistent sentence with a poorly written one is a bad bargain. The better option is to rewrite.

**Rewritten:** Someone has to do it, and has to do it well.

Many writers abhor the he or she solution. Following are more examples of why rewriting is a better idea than using he or she or him or her to keep sentences consistent.



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**Inconsistent:** No one realizes when their time is up.

**Awkward:** No one realizes when his or her time is up.

**Rewritten:** No one realize when the time is up.

**Inconsistent:** If you see anyone on the trail, tell them to be careful.

**Awkward:** If you see anyone on the trail, tell him or her to be careful.

**Rewritten:** Tell anyone you see on the trail to be careful.

**Rule 12.** When a pronoun is linked with a noun by ‘and’, mentally remove the ‘and + noun phrase’ to avoid trouble.

**Incorrect:** Her and her friend came over.

If we remove and her friend, we're left with the ungrammatical Her came over.

**Correct:** She and her friend came over.

**Incorrect:** I invited he and his wife.

If we remove ‘and his wife’, we're left with the ungrammatical ‘I invited he’.

**Correct:** I invited him and his wife.

**Incorrect:** Bill asked my sister and I.

If we remove ‘my sister and’, we're left with the ungrammatical ‘Bill asked I’.

**Correct:** Bill asked my sister and me.



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**Rule 13.** If two people possess the same item, and one of the joint owners is written as a pronoun, use the possessive form for both.

**Incorrect:** Maria and my home

**Incorrect:** Mine and Maria's home

**Correct:** Maria's and my home

**Incorrect:** he and Maria's home

**Incorrect:** him and Maria's home

**Correct:** his and Maria's home

**Incorrect:** you and Maria's home

**Incorrect:** yours and Maria's home

**Correct:** Maria's and your home

**Note:** As the above examples demonstrate, when one of the co-owners is written as a pronoun, use possessive adjectives (my, your, her, our, their). Avoid possessive pronouns (mine, yours, hers, ours, theirs) in such constructions.

Do not combine a subject pronoun and an object pronoun in phrases like her and I or he and me. Whenever and or or links an object pronoun (her, me) and a subject pronoun (he, I), one of those pronouns will always be wrong.

**Incorrect:** Her and I went home.

**Correct:** She and I went home. (She went and I went.)