Pronouns take the place of nouns. As substitutes for nouns, pronouns allow more variety in writing by avoiding repetition.

A pronoun, as a noun replacement, has the same variety of functions as a noun, depending on the pronoun's position in a sentence.

The highlighted words in the following sentences are pronouns that reflect the same functions as nouns:

1) He emailed the memo.  
The pronoun he functions as the subject of the sentence.

2) The employee e-mailed it.  
The pronoun it functions as the direct object of the sentence.

3) The employee e-mailed him the memo.  
The pronoun him functions as the indirect object of the sentence.

4) The employee e-mailed the memo to him.  
The pronoun him functions as the object of the preposition.

5) The employee’s memo is his.  
The pronoun his functions as the subject complement.

Types of Pronouns

Pronouns are classified into several types. They include personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, reflexive pronouns and relative pronouns.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns indicate the person speaking, the person spoken to, or the person or object spoken of. There are three forms of personal pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Form</th>
<th>Object Form</th>
<th>Possessive Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>ours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sentences show how personal pronouns take the place of nouns.

1) Alison threw the bouquet to the women. (nouns)  
   She threw it to them. (pronouns)

2) The tourists followed the guide along the ridge. (nouns)  
   They followed him along it. (pronouns)
Demonstrative Pronouns
Demonstrative pronouns direct attention to particular persons or things. There are only four demonstrative pronouns:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this</td>
<td>these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>those</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This and these refer to things that are nearby either in space or time. In contrast, that and those refer to things that are farther away either in space or time.

The following sentences show how the demonstrative pronouns can replace nouns.

1) The lamp in the kitchen belongs with the furniture in the bedroom. (nouns) That belongs with those. (pronouns)

2) The recent story describes the family’s adventures. (nouns) This describes those. (pronouns)

Interrogative Pronouns
Interrogative pronouns replace nouns in questions. They include who, which, what, whoever, whatever, whose.

The following sentences show how nouns as subjects of declarative sentences or statements can be replaced by interrogative pronouns as subjects in interrogative sentences or questions.

1) The program was never aired. (noun as subject) What was never aired? (pronoun as subject)

2) The girl fell asleep early. (noun as subject) Who fell asleep early? (pronoun as subject)

3) The person who wrote the report lacked the proper data. (noun as subject) Whoever wrote the report lacked the proper data. (pronoun as subject)

An interrogative pronoun can also replace a possessive noun. Note how the following pair of sentences shows how the object of the declarative sentence becomes the subject of the interrogative sentence.

This is Marjorie’s. (possessive noun as object of the verb) Whose is this? (interrogative pronoun as subject of the verb)

Indefinite Pronouns
Indefinite pronouns replace nouns, but they do not refer to any specific person, place, or thing.

The following pair of sentences shows how indefinite pronouns replace nouns with non-specific references.

1) The politicians vote on the bill. (noun) Each of the politicians votes on the bill. (pronoun)

Note: The plural verb vote agrees with the plural subject politicians in the first sentence. The second sentence replaces the noun politicians with the pronoun each. Each is a singular subject that agrees with the singular verb votes.
Some indefinite pronouns are always singular while others are always plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>everybody</td>
<td>anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobody</td>
<td>somebody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflexive Pronouns**
Reflexive pronouns emphasize or reflect on their antecedents. Antecedents are the nouns or pronouns already mentioned.

The following sentence shows how reflexive pronouns refer back to their antecedents.

1) Rita treated herself to a piece of chocolate cake.
   In this sentence, the reflexive pronoun *herself* refers to its antecedent *Rita*.

If there is no reference made to an antecedent in the sentence, use a personal pronoun instead of a reflexive pronoun.

2) The piece of chocolate was bought for her. (*Not herself*)
   In this sentence, the personal pronoun *her* is used instead of the reflexive pronoun *herself* because the pronoun has no antecedent.

**Other Examples of Reflexive Pronouns:**
myself        yourself        himself        ourselves        yourselves        themselves

**Relative Pronouns**
Relative pronouns introduce clauses that say something about the noun phrases that precede them. The most common relative pronouns are *who*, *which* and *that*. Other relative pronouns are *whom*, *whose*, *where* and *when*.

The following sentences contain relative pronouns:

1) My teacher showed us a book *that* was printed in 1849.
2) The space shuttle Daedalus, *which* had recently come out of storage, veered out of control as soon as it entered the ion storm.
3) I hope the person *who* stole my Ethics textbook will read it.

In the above sentences, the relative pronouns are the subjects of the clauses they introduce. Relative pronouns can also be objects, as in the sentences below:

1) The hat *that* my cousin bought looks like a lampshade.
2) The man *whom* the neurosurgeon married speaks seven languages.
3) My veterinarian’s toucan, *which* she picked up on her recent travels, amuses the visitors in her clinic.

The relative pronoun can be omitted when it is the object of an essential clause, as in the first two of the three sentences above:

1) The hat *my cousin bought* looks like a lampshade. (*that* has been omitted)
2) The man *the neurosurgeon married* speaks seven languages. (*whom* has been omitted)

The relative pronoun can also be the object of a preposition:

1) The programme *to which* we applied is full.
2) The readers *for whom* this book has been written will probably never read it.