

**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.

Subject Form	Object Form	Possessive Form
I	me	mine
you	you	yours
he	him	his
she	her	hers
it	it	its
we	us	ours
they	them	theirs

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:

Singular	Plural
this	these
that	those

*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.

Singular		Plural	
everybody	anyone	both	several
nobody	somebody	most	few

## 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.