Pronouns

The purpose of a pronoun is to replace a noun. Pronouns can be broken into five classes: *personal, interrogative, demonstrative, indefinite,* and *relative.*

In order for a sentence to work, the pronoun must clearly refer to the antecedent – the noun that it replaces. The pronoun and antecedent must agree in number with the noun or phrase it references. Therefore, if a noun or pronoun is singular or plural, then the antecedent must match. It is best to place the pronoun as close to its antecedent as the sentence allows.

* **Tim** lent **his** car to Eric. (The car belongs to the antecedent Tim, so the possessive pronoun “his” is used)

Out of the five classes, **personal pronouns** are used most often: ***I, you, he, she, it, we***, and***they***. With the exception of *it*, the personal pronouns refer to people. Each form of personal pronoun lets the reader know who is speaking, who is being spoken about, or who is spoken to within the sentence. With that in mind, personal pronouns can be divided into three cases: the subjective case, the objective case, and the possessive case.

|  |
| --- |
| **Personal Pronouns** |
|  |
| **Point of View and Number** | **Subjective** | **Objective** | **Possessive** |
|  |
| First Person Singular | I | Me | My, Mine |
|  |  |  |  |
| Second Person Singular | You | You | Your, Yours |
|  |  |  |  |
| Third Person Singular | He | Him | His |
| Third Person Singular | She | Her | Her, Hers |
| Third Person Singular | It | It | Its |
|  |  |  |  |
| First Person Plural | We | Us | Our, Ours |
| Second Person Plural | You | You | Your, Yours |
| Third Person Plural | They | Them | Their, Theirs |

In the **subjective case**, the pronoun is acting as the **subject**.

* **I** decided to buy a new car.
* **You** can take a ride.
* Eric never drives without putting on **his** seatbelt.

In the **objective case**, the **pronoun is receiving the action** of a verb, compound verb, preposition, or phrase.

* Eric gave **me** a ride.
* Tim gave the car keys to **you**.
* Tim took **them** for a ride.

In the **possessive case**, the pronoun **is** **defining the ownership** of a particular object or person.

* The polka-dotted umbrella is **mine**.
* Is this red umbrella **yours**?
* The striped umbrella is **hers**.

**Interrogative Pronouns** are used to **ask questions**. The answer to the question usually determines the antecedent. Until then, the antecedent is unknown to the reader.

* Who is at the door?
* To whom did you give the book?
* What topic was taught today?

|  |
| --- |
| **Interrogative Pronouns** |
| Who | Whom | Whose | What  | Which |

**Demonstrative Pronouns** point out specific persons, places, or things. They may function as nouns or adjectives.

* **This** (cookie) has the most calories.
* **Those** cookies are fattening.

|  |
| --- |
| **Demonstrative Pronouns** |
| Number | Pronoun | Reference |
| Singular | This  | near |
| Singular | That | far |
| Plural | These | near |
| Plural | Those | far |

**Indefinite Pronouns** do not refer to one particular person or thing. Most take singular verbs.

* **Something** fell off the shelf.
* **Both** can be found in the library.

|  |
| --- |
|  **Common Indefinite Pronouns** |
| Singular | Another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, none, no one, nothing, one, other, somebody, someone, something |
| Singular orPlural | All, any, none, some |
| Plural | Both, few, many, others, several |

**Relative Pronouns** link the clause which they introduce to their antecedent.

* The boy **who** lost his bike walked home from school.
* Mary noticed **that** Bob had lost weight.

|  |
| --- |
| **Relative Pronouns** |
| Who  | Which | That |
| Use who to refer to the antecedent when it is a person | Use which or that to refer to animals and things |

BCCC Feb. 2011