

# Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns indicate the person speaking, the person spoken to, or the person or object spoken of. Notice in the following table that personal pronouns change their form (or *case*) depending on who is speaking (called the *person*), how many are speaking (the *number*), and the sex (or *gender*) of the speaker. For example, the third person feminine singular objective case is *her*. Most personal pronoun errors by speakers and writers involve faulty usage of case forms. Study this table to avoid errors in personal pronoun use.

	Nominative		Objective		Possessive	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
First Person	I	we	me	us	my mine	our ours
Second Person	you  Thou	you	you  Thee	you	your yours Thy Thine	your yours
Third Person	he she it	they	him her it	them	his her hers its	their theirs

## Nominative Case

### Subjects of Verbs

Nominative-case pronouns are used primarily as the subjects of verbs. Every verb or verb phrase, regardless of its position in a sentence, has a subject. If that subject is a pronoun, it must be in the nominative case.

- *We* thought that *they* were using instant messaging.
- *She* asked if *I* had a valid passport.

### Comparatives

In statements of comparisons, words are often implied but not actually stated. To determine pronoun case in only partially complete comparative statements introduced by *than* or *as*, always mentally finish the comparative by adding the implied missing words.

- Jason tires to save as much as they.
- Lindsay writes more messages than he.

## Subject Complement

Nominative-case pronouns also perform as subject complements. A pronoun that follows a linking verb and renames the subject must be in the nominative case. Be especially alert to the linking verbs *am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been*.

- It was I who placed the order.
- I'm sure it is she who usually picks up the office mail.
- If you were I, what would you do?

When a verb of several words appears in a phrase, look at the final word of the verb. If it is a linking verb, use a nominative pronoun.

- It might have been they who sent the package.
- The driver could have been he.
- If the manager had been she, I might have received the promotion.

### Objective Case

#### Object of a Verb

When pronouns act as direct or indirect objects of verbs, they must be in the objective case.

- The manager gave them a tour of the building.
- Mr. Powell asked her for help.

#### Object of a Preposition

The objective case is used for pronouns that are objects of prepositions.

- A letter signed by all of us was sent to him.
- A package for her arrived at 10 a.m.
- Just between you and me, profits are slipping.

### Possessive Case

Possessive pronouns show ownership. Unlike possessive nouns, possessive pronouns require no apostrophes. Study these five possessive pronouns: *hers, yours, ours, theirs, its*. Notice the absence of apostrophes. Do not confuse possessive pronouns with contractions. Contractions are shortened (contracted) forms of subjects and verbs, such as *it's* (for *it is*), *they're* (for *they are*), and *you're* (for *you are*). In these examples the apostrophes indicate omitted letters.

### Challenges in Using Personal Pronouns

#### Compound Subjects and Objects

When a pronoun appears in combination with a noun or other pronoun, special attention must be given to case selection. Use this technique to help you choose the correct pronoun case: Ignore the extra noun or pronoun and its related conjunction, and consider separately the pronoun in question to determine what the case should be.

- Tou-Mai asked ~~you and~~ me for advice.

- ~~Crystal~~ and he enrolled in the class.
- Would you like ~~Rasheed~~ and them to help you?

Notice in the first sentence, for example, that when *you and* is removed, the pronoun *me* must be selected because it functions as the object of the verb.

### **Appositives**

Appositives explain or rename previously mentioned nouns or pronouns. A pronoun in apposition takes the same case as that of the noun or pronoun with which it is in apposition. In order to determine more easily what pronoun case to use for a pronoun in combination with an appositive, temporarily ignore the appositive.

- We ~~consumers~~ are protected by laws.
- Precautions were taken by us ~~neighbors~~.

### **Reflexive (or Compound Personal) Pronouns**

Reflexive pronouns that end in *-self* emphasize or reflect on their antecedents (the nouns or pronouns previously mentioned).

- The president himself greeted each winner.
- We hope the matter will resolve itself.

Errors result when reflexive pronouns are used instead of personal pronouns. If no previously mentioned noun or pronoun is stated in the sentence, use a personal pronoun instead of a reflexive pronoun.

- Send the meeting agenda to either Brad or me. (not myself)
- Amy Beitel and I analyzed the research implications. (not myself)

Please note that *hissself* and *themselves* are substandard and should always be avoided.

### **Infinitive To Be Without a Subject**

Infinitives are the present forms of verbs preceded by *to*—for example, *to sit*, *to run*, and *to walk*. Nominative pronouns are used following the infinitive *to be* when the infinitive has no subject. In this instance the infinitive joins a complement (not an object) to the subject.

- Mikhail was mistakenly thought to be I.
- Why would Jennifer want to be she.

### **Infinitive To Be With a Subject**

When the infinitive *to be* has a subject, any pronoun following it will function as an object. Therefore, the pronoun following the infinitive will function as its object and take the objective case.

- The teacher believed Jennifer to be her.
- John expected the callers to be us.
- Regis judged the winner to be him.

Whenever you have selected a pronoun for the infinitive *to be* and you want to test its correctness, try reversing the pronoun and its antecedent. For example, *We thought the winner to be her* (*We thought her [not she] to be the winner*).

## Types of Pronouns

Here is a summary of the eight types of pronouns with sentences

- **Personal pronouns** replace nouns or other pronouns. Examples:

**Nominative Case:** I, we, you, he, she, it, they

**Objective Case:** me, us, you, him, her, it them

**Possessive Case:** my, mine, our, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its  
their, theirs

- **Relative pronouns** join subordinating clauses to antecedents. Examples: *who, whose, which, that whoever, whomever, whichever, whatever*.
- **Interrogative pronouns** replace nouns in a question. Examples: *who, whose, whom, which, what*.
- **Demonstrative pronouns** designate specific persons or things. Examples: *this, these, that, those*.
- **Indefinite pronouns** replace nouns. Examples: *everyone, anyone, someone, each, everybody, anybody, one, none, some, all*, and so on.
- **Reflexive pronouns (compound personal)** emphasize or reflect on antecedents. Examples: *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself*, and so on.
- **Reciprocal pronouns** indicate mutual relationship. Examples: *each other, one another*.
- **Intensive pronouns** emphasize use of reflexive pronouns. Example: I prepared the review *myself*.

## Exercises

**Directions:** Select the correct form.

1. Our manager asked whether (he, him) could make the presentation.
2. We could reach all applicants except (she, her) by e-mail.
3. Send the fax to (they, them) at their Florida address.
4. (They, Them), as well as some other employees, volunteered for the project.
5. It seems strange that someone like (he, him) could be given the assignment.
6. Please discuss it with Dewayna Scott and (she, her) before proceeding.
7. All the purchases made by (she, her) were billed incorrectly.
8. Are you sure (there's theirs) time to complete the form?
9. Courtney said that (its it's) your turn next.
10. Sean is certain that nobody but (he, him) can open the lock.
11. His bank and (he, him) developed a schedule of payments.
12. A profit-sharing plan was offered to (we, us) employees in place of cost-of-living raises.
13. No one worked harder on the project than (he, him).
14. Both girls, Alicia and (she, her), will be able to work this weekend.
15. (Us, We) delegates stayed in the Omni Hotel during the convention.
16. Catherine Bean and (myself, I, me) were signaled out for commendation.
17. Proposals submitted by (her and me, she and I) were considered first.
18. No one but my friend and (I, me) spoke up during the discussion.
19. Separate planes were taken by the business manager and (he, him).
20. The tragedy shocked Professor Munoz as much as (she, her).
21. Was it (they, them) who didn't know how to use the printer?
22. If you were (he, him), would you have sent that e-mail message?

23. President Darlene McClure asked the team and (I, me) to write a proposal.
24. If I were ((she, her), I would withdraw my endorsement.
25. Hyong Than said that it was (he, him) who used the printer last.
26. We all assumed the new president would be (she, her).
27. It might have been (they, them) who called in the alarm.
28. The audience didn't discover that Marcelle was (she, her) until the final act.
29. They thought Marcelle to be (she, her)
30. I was asked to contact you and (they, them) immediately.