

Pronouns

Introduction

It is important to understand the difference between:

- subject pronouns
- object pronouns
- possessive pronouns

If you understand the difference, you will be less likely to make mistakes. The different types of pronouns occur in different positions in a sentence. If you remember the type of each pronoun, then you should find it easy to use pronouns correctly in sentences.

SUBJECT PRONOUNS	OBJECT PRONOUNS	POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS
I	me	my
you	you	your
he	him	his
she	her	her
it	it	its
we	us	our
they	them	their
who	whom	whose

Pronouns Explained

Subject Pronouns

Subject pronouns take the place of noun phrases in the subject position of a sentence. The subject position usually precedes the main verb to which the pronoun relates.

Here are some example sentences.

I gave the pencil to the boy.

You gave the pencil to the boy.

He gave the pencil to the boy.

She gave the pencil to the boy.
We gave the pencil to the boy.
They gave the pencil to the boy.
Who gave the pencil to the boy?

Object Pronouns

Object pronouns take the place of noun phrases in the object position of the sentence. The object positions usually come after the main verb to which the pronoun relates or after a preposition.

Here are some example sentences

The girl gave **me** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **me**.

The girl gave **you** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **you**.

The girl gave **him** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **him**.

The girl gave **her** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **her**.

The girl gave **us** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **us**.

The girl gave **them** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **them**.

The girl gave **whom** the pencil.
The girl gave the pencil to **whom**?

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns take the place of articles such as “the” or “a” to show ownership of something.

Here are some example sentences.

My sister gave **your** pencils to **his** brother.
Her sister gave **our** pencils to **their** brother.
Whose sister gave **my** pencils to **your** brother?

Our sister gave **her** pencils to **whose** brother?
His sister gave **his** pencils to **her** brother.

Trouble Spots

Who vs Whom

Many people do not know when to use **who** and when to use **whom**. Remember **WHO** is the subject form (just like **HE**) and **WHOM** is the object form (just like **HIM**).

Who I don't know **who** will hire the boy.

In this sentence "**who**" refers to the person who will hire the boy. And, just as you would say "**He** will hire the boy", so you would say "I don't know **who** will hire the boy".

Whom I don't know **whom** she will hire.

In this sentence "**whom**" refers to the person who will be hired. And, just as you would say "she will hire **him**", so you would say "I don't know **whom** she will hire".

Spelling

People often spell the following possessive pronouns incorrectly. Make sure you know how to spell them.

your	Your brother said that you're doing well at university.
its	The baby lost its rattle so it's very unhappy.
their	They're going to see their tutor.
whose	Who's going to see the lecturer whose class was cancelled?

The words that have the same sound as the possessive are contracted forms of two words and are quite different.

you're	Your brother said that you're (means you are) doing well at university.
it's	The baby lost its rattle so it's (means it is) very unhappy.
they're	They're (means they are) going to see their tutor.

who's **Who's (means who is)** going to see the lecturer whose class was cancelled?

Conjoined Pronouns

People also get confused about conjoined pronouns such as “**you and me**”, “**you and I**” and “**you and he**”.

There should be no confusion if you remember that the subject forms of pronouns are used in the subject positions and the object forms are used in the object positions.

Here are some example sentences.

He will pass the exam.
You and he will pass the exam.

The teacher likes **him**.
The teacher likes **you and him**.

I passed the exam.
You and I passed the exam.

The examiner passed **me**.
The examiner passed **you and me**.

She won the award.
You and she won the award.

The class nominated **her**.
The class nominated **you and her**.

Pronoun Quizzes

When you think you are ready, try the following quizzes.

Pronouns 1

Fourteen of the words on the left of the table below can be used to complete the table. Place each of these fourteen words in its appropriate position in the table.

	Subject Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun	Object Pronoun
she	you	I	...
he	my
who	I	...	her
his	it's
me	we	...	our
they	whose
who's	their	who	them
there	us		you
your	her
whom			

Pronouns 2

For each of the following 6 sentences, choose the appropriate word or words to fill in the blank.

1. You and ... do not need to come to the next meeting.

- him
- he
- them
- those

2. ... worked for six hours last night.

- Him and I
- Him and me
- He and myself
- He and I

3. They will send the data to you and ...

- also he.
- he.
- after him.
- him.

4. They will give the position to either ...

- him or me.
- him or I.
- him or myself.
- he or I.

5. The teacher will give ... the book.

- you and I
- you and myself
- you and me
- you then I

6. Sue and ... will discuss this later.

- them
- him
- I
- me

Who 1

For each of the following 6 sentences, choose the appropriate word to fill in the blank.

1. I like that teacher ... clothes are really trendy.

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

2. I like that teacher ... going to take us on the excursion.

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

3. To ... should I address the letter?

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

4. She is a woman for ...I have great respect.

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

5. I gave the results to the secretary ... phoned yesterday.

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

6. I gave the results to the secretary ... you admire.

- whom
- whose
- who's
- who

Who 2

The sentences in the following problems have an asterisk in place of the appropriate form of the word **who**. Replace the asterisk in each sentence with the correct form. Use one word to replace the asterisk. A contracted form, such as **who's**, counts as one word.

1. I wonder * computer this is.
2. To * should I give this report?
3. I like the teacher * won the award.
4. I would like to know * going to the party.
5. The programmer was concerned about * she should contact.
6. We all know * likely to give the best presentation.

Answers

Pronouns 1

Subject Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun	Object Pronoun
I	my	me
he	his	him
she	her	her
we	our	us
they	their	them
you	your	you
who	whose	whom

Pronouns 2

1. You and ... do not need to come to the next meeting.

- him ✗
- he ✓
- them ✗
- those ✗

✓ That's right. You would say "He does not need to come to the meeting" so you would say "You and he do not need to come to
✗ No. Think about whether this is the subject or the object position.

2. ... worked for six hours last night.

- Him and I ✗
- Him and me ✗
- He and myself ✗
- He and I ✓

✓ Correct. "He" and "I" are both subject pronouns.
✗ Incorrect. You need to use subject pronouns.

3. They will send the data to you and ...

- also he. ✗
- he. ✗
- after him. ✗
- him. ✓

✓ Correct! This is the object position and therefore needs an object pronoun.
✗ Incorrect. You just need a simple object pronoun.

4. They will give the position to either ...

- him or me. ✓
- him or I. ✗
- him or myself. ✗
- he or I. ✗

✓ Yes. "Him" and "me" are both object pronouns.

✗ No. This is the object position so you will need two object pronouns.

5. The teacher will give ... the book.

- you and I ✗
- you and myself ✗
- you and me ✓
- you then I ✗

✓ Correct. This is the object position.

✗ No. This is the object position, so choose two object pronouns.

6. Sue and ... will discuss this later.

- them ✗
- him ✗
- I ✓
- me ✗

✓ Correct. You would say "I will discuss this later", so you say "Sue and I will discuss this later".

✗ No. Ignore the "Sue and" and think about what you would put in the space.

Who 1

1. I like that teacher ... clothes are really trendy.

- whom ✗
- whose ✓
- who's ✗
- who ✗

✓ Correct. This is the possessive form - the teacher owns the trendy clothes.

✗ No. You need to find the possessive form of “who”.

2. I like that teacher ... going to take us on the excursion.

- whom ✗
- whose ✗
- who's ✓
- who ✗

✓ Yes. The missing part means “who is” and so the correct response is the contracted form “who’s”.

✗ No. Think about what the missing part of the sentence means.

3. To ... should I address the letter?

- whom ✓
- whose ✗
- who's ✗
- who ✗

✓ That’s correct. The object form “whom” is required.

✗ No. Think about whether you would say “To he” or “to him”. This might help you work out whether you need a subject form or an object form.

4. She is a woman for ... I have great respect.

- whom ✓
- whose ✗
- who's ✗
- who ✗

✓ Correct. This is the object form.

✗ No. Think about whether you would say “I have great respect for she” or “I have great respect for her”. Then think about whether you need the subject or object form of “who”.

5. I gave the results to the secretary ... phoned yesterday.

- whom ✗
- whose ✗
- who's ✗
- who ✓

✓ Correct. The subject form is required. Just as you would say “she phoned yesterday”, so you would say “... who phoned yesterday”.

✗ Incorrect.

6. I gave the results to the secretary ... you admire.

- whom ✓
- whose ✗
- who's ✗
- who ✗

✓ That's right. This is the object form. “Whom” refers to the object of “admire” as in “you admired whom”.

✗ No. Think about whether you would say “you admire he” or “you admire him”. Then think about whether you need the subject or the object form of “who”.

Who 2

1. I wonder **whose** computer this is.
(This is the possessive form of “who”.)
2. To **whom** should I give this report?
(The object form “whom” is required.)
3. I like the teacher **who** won the award.
(The subject form “who” is required.)
4. I would like to know **who’s** going to the party.
(You need “who’s” which is the contracted form of “who is”.)
5. The programmer was concerned about **whom** she should contact.
(“Whom” is the object of the verb “contact”.)
6. We all know **who’s** likely to give the best presentation.
(You need the form of “who” that means “who is”.)