Guidelines for Using Personal Pronouns

Pronouns fall into three cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective Case</th>
<th>Objective Case</th>
<th>Possessive Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my, mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your, yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>her/hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>our, ours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your, yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>their, theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Singular | Plural

Basic Use of Subjective Case

Subjective-case pronouns are used as subjects of verbs.

**He** is the supervisor we hired last month.

**We** asked if they were coming.

**They** submitted the report on time.
Objective-case pronouns are used as objects of verbs and prepositions.

- The manager called us.
- We told them our plans.
- That desk is for her.
- Requests are sent to him.
TIP

When the words *between, but, like,* and *except* are used as *prepositions*, be sure to use an *objective-case pronoun* for the object of the preposition.

- No one *but* (I or me?) has the combination.
- Workers *like* Brad and (she or her?) are excellent.
- Let’s keep this *between* you and (I or me?).
Basic Use of Possessive Case

Possessive pronouns show ownership or special relationship. They require NO apostrophes: hers, yours, ours, theirs, its.

**Hers** is the shiny red Jeep.

**Our** report is here; where is **yours**?

**Its** hood makes the machine less noisy.

**Theirs** is the house with white trim.
TIP

Don’t confuse contractions with possessive pronouns.

• *There’s* an exit at the rear. (*There’s* = *There is*)
• Although *it’s* late, we must finish. (*it’s* = *it is*)
• *You’re* sure to get the job (*You’re* = *You are*)

**HINT:** Possessive pronouns never have apostrophes.
Challenges In Using Personal Pronouns

- Reflexive Pronouns
- Compounds
- Comparatives
- Appositives
- Subject Complements
Compounds

When pronouns appear as compound subjects or objects, ignore the extra noun or pronoun and related words.

Only the manager and I (not me) will attend.

Mrs. Kuwata assigned Mike and me (not I) to the job.
Comparatives

In statements of comparison, finish the implied comparison in order to determine pronoun case.

No one works harder than she (not her).
(No one works harder than she works.)

Smoking annoys me as much as him.
(Smoking annoys me as much as it annoys him.)
Which is correct?

My husband loves money as much as I.

OR

My husband loves money as much as me.

See the difference?
Appositives

Appositives: rename or explain previously mentioned nouns or pronouns

• When pronouns are used in apposition, temporarily ignore the appositive.

We (not Us) clerks have our own union.

The lockers are for us (not we) girls.
Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns: end in **self** or **selves**

- Do not use a reflexive pronoun unless it refers to a previously stated noun or pronoun in the same sentence.

I *myself* placed the order.

My friend and I (not *myself*) will apply.

The mail is for Lisa and *him* (not *himself*).
Whenever a pronoun follows a linking verb, that pronoun will be in the subjective case.

It was he who volunteered.

The caller might have been she.
Select the correct pronoun to complete the following sentences.

1. Please reply to Tyler or (I, me, myself).
2. My friend and (I, me, myself) both applied for the job.
3. (Yours, Your’s) is the aisle seat.
4. Everyone plans to attend the seminar except Sue and (she, her).
Try Your Skill

5. Ryan scored lower than (he, him).

6. The movie surprised me as much as (she, her).

7. (We, Us) attorneys plan to appeal the decision.

8. What shade of red is (its, it’s) exterior?

Select the correct pronoun to complete the following sentences.
### Summary of Pronoun Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective Case</th>
<th>Objective Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject of verb</td>
<td>Direct or indirect object of verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject complement</td>
<td>Object of preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinitive <em>to be</em> without subject</td>
<td>Object of an infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infinitive <em>to be</em> with subject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fundamentals of Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement
Clear Reference

Do not use pronouns unless the person or thing referred to, the antecedent, is clear.

• Don told Andrew that he was eligible. (To whom does he refer?)

• In some restaurants they require coats and ties. (Instead of the vague pronoun they, use a noun such as the owners or management.)
Number Agreement

Pronouns must agree in number with the nouns they represent.

• One member of the girls’ team forgot her tennis shoes. (The singular pronoun her refers to the singular antecedent member.)

• Several candidates were given their tests at once.
Plural Pronoun

If a pronoun refers to two nouns joined by **and**, the pronoun must be plural.

The manager and the supervisor discussed **their** plans for improving work flow.
Disregard phrases that come between a pronoun and the word to which it refers.

- Judy Foster, along with several staff members, took her vacation in August.
- One of the male employees had his merit review.
Pronouns must agree in gender with their antecedents.

- Ms. Cortez gave her approval.  
  (Feminine gender)

- Josh parked his truck.  
  (Masculine gender)

- Our office has its own lunch room.  
  (Neuter gender)
When the gender of the antecedent is unknown, the use of common-gender, (masculine pronouns), was accepted in the past.

Sensitive writers today should avoid common-gender pronouns, which can sound sexist.
Common Gender

• Every worker is trained for his job.

Alternatives

• All workers are trained for their jobs.
• Every worker is trained for a job.
• Every worker is trained for his or her job.

(Avoid using this last wordy construction.)
Unacceptable

• Every worker is trained for their job.

Why is this unacceptable?

Number Agreement

Every **worker** is trained for **their** job.

Singular  Plural
Or-Nor

Indefinite Pronouns

Collective Nouns

Company and Organization Names

Each and Every
When antecedents are joined by *or* or *nor*, a pronoun should agree with the antecedent closest to it.

- It was either Matt or Ken who offered his seat.
- Neither the supervisor nor the workers expected to see *their* salaries increased.
- Neither the workers nor the supervisor expected to see *his* (or *her*) salary increased.
When they function as antecedents, some indefinite pronouns are always singular and others are always plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always Singular</th>
<th>Always Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anybody</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyone</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anything</td>
<td>many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each</td>
<td>several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>either</td>
<td>somebody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nobody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>everything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Everyone in the men’s chorus wore his robe.

Somebody left his or her car lights on.

A few of the employees in our company have their own private parking spaces.
Collective Nouns

• The jury rendered its (not their) verdict.

• The jury entered the courtroom individually and took their seats.

• Words such as jury, faculty, committee, staff, union, team, flock, family, and group are considered singular when they function as a unit.

• Collective nouns can also be plural when the elements operate separately.
Company and Organization Names

The names of companies and organizations are generally considered to be singular.

- Southwest Airlines is expanding its (not their) routes.

- Milberg & Weiss changed its (not their) name.
When *each* or *every* precedes a compound subject joined by *and*, the subject is considered singular.*

* This idiosyncratic usage is difficult to accept, but authorities agree on it.
• Each player and coach on the men’s team is expected to bring his (not their) own play book. [Think: Each single player and each single coach is expected to bring his own play book.]

• Once on the job every intern and new employee values his or her (not their) computer training. [Think: Every single intern and every single new employee values his or her computer training.]
Try Your Skill

Select the correct pronoun or word to complete the following sentences.

1. (They, Meteorologists) predict it will rain tomorrow.

2. One member of the boys’ soccer team left (his, their) jacket on the bus.

3. Gordon Young, together with his employees, ate (his, their) lunch outdoors.
Try Your Skill

4. Every employee is free to speak (*his, his or her, their*) mind.

5. Either Max or his employees will have (*his, their*) requests denied.

6. Either his employees or Max will have (*his, their*) request denied.
7. Someone still needs to cast *(his, his or her, their)* vote.

8. Next, the faculty turned *(its, their)* attention to salary issues.

9. Target plans to lower *(its, their)* prices.
10. Every manager and sales rep is provided \((his\ or\ her,\ their)\) own company car.

**THINK:** Every single manager and every single sales rep is provided his or her own company car.
Advanced Pronoun Uses:  
*Who/Whom* and  
*Whoever/Whomever*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Subjects and subject complements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whoever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whom</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Objects of verbs and prepositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whomever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow these steps to select *who* or *whom*:

1. Isolate the *who/whom* clause.
2. Invert the clause, if necessary, to restore normal subject-verb-object order.
3. Substitute **he (she)** or **him (her)** for *who* or *whom*.
   - If the sentence sounds correct with *he (she)*, replace *he (she)* with *who*.
   - If the sentence sounds correct with *him (her)*, replace *him (her)* with *whom*.
Example: He is the one (who/whom) we want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Isolate clause</td>
<td>(who/whom) we want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Invert</td>
<td>we want (who/whom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Substitute</td>
<td>we want him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Equate</td>
<td>we want whom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Complete</td>
<td>He is the one whom we want.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. He is the applicant (who/whom) applied last week.

2. Did the visitor say (who/whom) she wanted to see?
Mentally ignore parenthetical phrases like I believe, you think, we know, and we are sure.
Example: Hire a clerk (who/whom) you think is good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Isolate clause</td>
<td>(who/whom) you think is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ignore phrase</td>
<td>(who/whom) is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>he is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Equate</td>
<td>who is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Hire a clerk who you think is good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clauses containing *whoever/whomever* often function as subjects or objects in sentences.

When the entire clause acts as a subject or object, determine how *whoever/whomever* functions within that clause.
Example: Those supplies are for (whoever/whomever) ordered them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Isolate clause</th>
<th>(whoever/whomever) ordered them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>he ordered them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Equate</td>
<td>whoever ordered them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Those supplies are for whoever ordered them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Advanced Pronoun Uses: Whose/Who’s’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Apostrophe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whose</td>
<td>Possessive pronoun</td>
<td>No (neither does hers, his, or theirs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’s</td>
<td>Contraction, meaning, “who is” or “who has”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples Contrasting

**Whose/Who’s**

- She said she knows *whose* car that is.
- *Whose* book is this?
- *Who’s* going to be the first volunteer?
- Guess *who’s* coming to dinner.
Try Your Skill

1. We will hire (whoever/whomever) you may recommend.

2. Have you checked with (whoever/whomever) placed this order?

Select the correct pronoun to complete the following sentences.
3. Brian is the employee about (who/whom) I believe you asked.

Select the correct pronoun to complete the following sentences.
Try Your Skill

Select the correct word to complete the following sentences.

5. (Whose/Who’s) going to be the one to tell her?

6. In (whose/who’s) memory are you making the donation?