



Pronouns

Pronouns are words we use in place of nouns. We use them to keep us from repeating the regular noun. Without the use of pronouns, both reading and writing would become very tiresome and very confusing, particularly to a reader. Here is a short paragraph without any pronouns.

Harry met Bill at the park. Harry and Bill played in the park for one hour, then Tom joined Harry and Bill. Tom invited Harry and Bill over to Tom's house, but Harry said that Harry had to meet Harry's father. Bill told Tom that Bill had promised Harry to go with Harry to meet Harry's father.

You can easily see that without using pronouns to replace some of the names, the paragraph gets long and repetitive. Here is the same paragraph using appropriate pronouns.

Harry met Bill at the park. They played there for one hour, then Tom joined them. Tom invited them over to his house, but Harry said that he had to meet his father. Bill told Tom that he had promised to go with him to meet his father.

Pronouns are the only example in English where we use different words for the subject and object of verbs. This table lists the main pronouns:

| | As the subject | | As the object | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st person (includes the speaker/ writer) | I | we | me | us |
| 2nd person (includes the listener/ reader) | you | you | you | you |
| 3rd person (other people or things) | he (man) she (woman) it (thing) who (question) | they who (question) | him (man) her (woman) it (thing) whom* (question) | them whom* (question) |

However, any word that takes over the job of a noun is called a pronoun.

Examples: Telephones are very common, so nearly every home has one.

In this sentence the pronoun one has been used to replace the word telephone.



POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

The purpose of the **possessive pronoun** is much the same as the regular pronoun. The only difference is that possessive pronouns show ownership. With regular nouns, we use an apostrophe to show ownership:

Examples: Angela put Angela’s books on Angela’s desk.
This sentence needs pronouns!

Angela put her books on her desk.

We can’t use these tables. The tables’ legs are broken.
Pronouns!

We can’t use these tables. Their legs are broken.

By using apostrophes in “Angela’s” and “tables’” we show who or what has the books, the desk and the legs. “Her” and “their” do the same job.

CAREFUL! A common error is to write **it’s** as the possessive pronoun for **it**.
Only use **it’s** as a contraction for **it is** or **it has**.
The word that means “belonging to it” is **its** — no apostrophe!

Examples: Do you think it’s going to rain? It’s been raining for three days.
“It’s” is a contraction for “it is” in the first sentence, and for “it has” in the second sentence.

The dog lost its collar.
“Its” means “belonging to it”, the dog.

| | As an adjective | | As a noun | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st person (includes the speaker/ writer) | my | our | mine | ours |
| 2nd person (includes the listener/ reader) | your | your | yours | yours |
| 3rd person (other people or things) | his (man) her (woman) its (thing) whose (question) | their whose (question) | his (man) hers (woman) its (thing) whose (question) | theirs whose (question) |

Examples: This book is my book.
“My” means “belonging to me”. It’s an adjective that modifies “book”, but the word “book” gets repeated.

This book is mine.
“Mine” means “the one belonging to me”, and it acts like a noun. It also replaces the word “book”.



EXERCISES:

A. Underline the regular pronouns and circle the possessive pronouns in these sentences.

Example:

When did they lose their money?

- 1) When will she give us our test?
- 2) I would advise you to see your dentist.
- 3) He opened his camera to put film in it.
- 4) Have you and your wife seen our new home?
- 5) We are planning to visit them at their camp.
- 6) Her car had its engine replaced, but it's being checked by my mechanic.
- 7) His tickets are all used up but I still have mine.

B. Underline the regular pronouns and circle the possessive pronouns in this paragraph.

Harry met Bill at the park. They played there for one hour, then Tom joined them. Tom invited them over to his house, but Harry said that he had to meet his father. Bill told Tom that he had promised to go with him to meet his father.

SOLUTIONS

- A. 1) she, us, (our) 2) I, you, (your) 3) He, (his), it 4) you, (your), our
5) We, them, (their) 6) (Her), (its), it's, (my) 7) (His), I, (mine)
- B. 1) They, there, them, them, (his), he, (his), he, him, (his).

