

The Forms of Personal Pronouns A

Case

Case is the form that a pronoun takes to show its relationship to other words in a sentence. English has three cases for pronouns: the nominative case, the objective case, and the possessive case.

The *nominative case* is used when a pronoun is the subject of a verb or is used as a predicate nominative. The nominative case personal pronouns are *I, you, he, she, it, we, and they*.

EXAMPLES **They** will attend the study session tomorrow. [The pronoun *They* is in the nominative case.]

The winner was **he**. [The pronoun *he* is in the nominative case.]

The *objective case* is used when the pronoun is a direct object, an indirect object, or an object of a preposition. The objective case pronouns are *me, you, him, her, it, us, and them*.

EXAMPLE If the phone rings, please answer **it** for **me**. [The pronouns *it* and *me* are in the objective case.]

NOTE The pronouns *you* and *it* are the same in the nominative and objective cases.

The *possessive case* is used when the pronoun shows ownership of something. The possessive case pronouns are *my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, and theirs*.

EXAMPLE Did John and Chris send **their** applications yet? [The pronoun *their* shows that the applications belong to John and Chris.]

EXERCISE A Identify the case of the underlined pronoun in each of the following sentences. On the line provided, write *N* if the pronoun is in the *nominative case*, *O* if the pronoun is in the *objective case*, and *P* if the pronoun is in the *possessive case*.

Example 1. Except for him, the class was ready to leave. [*Him* is in the objective case.]

 1. She will take Algebra I this year. [Which case is the pronoun *She*?]

 2. Will Frank bring his famous tamales to the party?

 3. Mrs. Chatham showed us the photographs from her trip.

 4. They remembered to bring their jackets.

 5. As the family drove away, the boy waved to them.

The Nominative Case

10a. The subject of a verb should be in the nominative case.

EXAMPLE **They** prepared lunch while **I** set the table. [*They* is the subject of the verb *prepared*. *I* is the subject of the verb *set*. Both pronouns are in the nominative case.]

EXERCISE B Circle the correct pronoun or pair of pronouns in parentheses in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** Did (they *them*) buy tickets for the dance yet? [*They* is the subject of the verb *did buy*.]
6. The train stopped, and (*he and I, him and me*) got on. [Are the pronouns used as subjects of a verb?]
7. How could (*I, me*) have forgotten about the dance!
8. Were (*they, them*) waiting for us?
9. (*You and I, You and me*) will have the same lunch period next year.
10. (*He and she, Him and her*) have known each other since they were children.

10b. A **predicate nominative** should be in the nominative case.

A predicate nominative is a noun or pronoun that is in the predicate and that identifies or refers to the subject. A pronoun that is used as a predicate nominative completes the meaning of a linking verb. Linking verbs are often forms of the verb *be* (*am, are, is, was, were, be, been, or being*).

EXAMPLE Were the only students in class **she** and **I**? [The pronouns *she* and *I* are a compound predicate nominative. The pronouns complete the meaning of the linking verb *Were* and identify the subject *students*.]

TIP To choose the correct form of a pronoun used as a predicate nominative, reverse the order of the words in the sentence so that the subject and the predicate nominative change places. Try each pronoun by itself with the verb. Choose the pronoun that sounds right with the verb.

ORIGINAL The tallest girl is (*her, she*).

REVERSED (*Her, She*) is the tallest girl. [*She is* sounds right. *Her is* does not sound right.]

ANSWER The tallest girl is **she**. [The correct pronoun is *she*.]

EXERCISE C Circle the correct pronoun or pair of pronouns in parentheses in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** The reporters are (he and she *him and her*). [The pronouns *he and she* are used as the predicate nominative of the verb *are* and are in the nominative case.]
11. Some of the students who applied were (*they, them*). [Is the pronoun used as a predicate nominative?]
12. Were the winners (*he and I, him and me*)?
13. The composer of that song was (*he, him*).
14. The next speaker will be (*I, me*).
15. That remarkable woman is (*she, her*)!

The Forms of Personal Pronouns B

The Objective Case

10c. A **direct object** should be in the objective case.

A direct object is a noun, pronoun, or word group that answers the question *Who* (or *What*) receives the action of the verb?

EXAMPLE Raymond lost his glasses but found **them** later. [The pronoun *them* tells what Raymond found and is in the objective case.]

EXERCISE A Circle the correct pronoun or pronouns in parentheses in the following sentences.

Example 1. The teacher has already helped (*he and she, him and her*). [The pronouns *him* and *her* are direct objects of the verb *has helped* and are in the objective case.]

1. Science excites (*she and I, her and me*) more than any other subject. [Whom does science excite?]
2. Do the cats like (*he, him*)?
3. My cousin will drive (*you and I, you and me*) home.
4. When the loaves have risen, put (*they, them*) in the oven.
5. The smell of baking bread attracted (*we, us*).

10d. An **indirect object** should also be in the objective case.

An indirect object tells *to whom* or *what* or *for whom* or *what* the action of the verb is done. An indirect object usually comes between an action verb and the direct object of that verb.

EXAMPLE Mom ordered **us** some chicken. [The pronoun *us* tells *for whom* the chicken was ordered. *Us* comes between the verb *ordered* and the direct object *chicken*.]

EXERCISE B Circle the correct pronoun or pronouns in parentheses in the following sentences.

Example 1. Did you give (*he and she, him and her*) directions to your house? [The pronouns *him* and *her* are indirect objects that tell to whom directions were given.]

6. Did Jonah bring (*she, her*) the math book? [To whom did Jonah bring the book?]
7. Show (*they, them*) the map in that book.
8. We're not hungry, so don't bring (*we, us*) anything.
9. Please fix (*me, I*) a sandwich.
10. Should I take (*they, them*) some flowers?

10e. An **object of a preposition** should be in the objective case.

A noun or a pronoun that follows a preposition is called the object of a preposition.

EXAMPLE Tom and Janie sat beside **us** and **them**. [*Us* and *them* are the objects of the preposition *beside* and are in the objective case.]

EXERCISE C Circle the correct pronoun or pronouns in parentheses in the following sentences.

Example 1. Mom was proud of (*I*, ***me***) when I competed in the contest. [The pronoun *me* is the object of the preposition *of* and is in the objective case.]

11. Please take a seat behind (*they*, *them*). [Which pronoun is used following the preposition *behind*?]
12. Was that project done by (*you and he*, *you and him*)?
13. Ms. Martin told the story to James and (*I*, *me*).
14. Toss the ball to (*he*, *him*) next time.
15. Explain that for (*I*, *me*), please.

An **appositive** is a noun or pronoun that identifies or describes another noun or pronoun that is next to it. A pronoun that is an appositive should be in the same case as the noun or pronoun it identifies or describes.

EXAMPLE The play's stars, **she and I**, took a final bow on stage. [The pronouns *she* and *I* are an appositive that identifies *stars*. *Stars* is the subject of the verb *took*, so the appositive pronouns are in the nominative case.]

Sometimes a pronoun is followed by an appositive. To choose the correct pronoun to use before an appositive, leave out the appositive and try each pronoun in the sentence.

EXAMPLE (*We*, *Us*) dancers will rehearse this afternoon. [*We will rehearse* sounds correct. *Us will rehearse* does not sound correct. *We* is the correct pronoun.]

EXERCISE D Circle the correct form of the pronoun or pronouns in parentheses in the following sentences.

Example 1. (***We***, *Us*) students asked many questions. [The pronoun *We* is the subject of the verb *asked* and is in the nominative case.]

16. Only two students, (*he and I*, *him and me*), wrote short stories. [Are the pronouns the appositive of a subject or of an object?]
17. The two boys, Daniel and (*he*, *him*), are talented musicians.
18. The teacher gave (*us*, *we*) new students three extra days to finish our projects.
19. (*Us*, *We*) girls have important matters to discuss.
20. The coach told (*we*, *us*) football players to line up.

Clear Reference

A pronoun should clearly refer to its antecedent.

A pronoun takes the place of another word or word group. This word or word group is called the *antecedent* of the pronoun.

EXAMPLE When the **cat** wants to go outside, **it** scratches at the door. [The pronoun *it* takes the place of *cat*. *Cat* is the antecedent of *it*.]

EXERCISE A Circle the antecedent of the underlined pronoun in each of the following sentences.

Example 1. The children brought their toys to Aunt Rachel's house. [The pronoun *their* takes the place of *children's*. *Children* is the antecedent of *their*.]

1. When you finish the book, please let me borrow it. [What noun does *it* take the place of?]
2. Have your classmates completed their research yet?
3. Kurt will hold the ladder for his father.
4. The mountains are beautiful, and some of them are covered with snow.
5. The town was named after its founder.

Unclear reference occurs when any one of two or more words can be a pronoun's antecedent. Revise sentences with unclear pronoun references so that the reader will know which word is the pronoun's antecedent.

UNCLEAR Joan saw Mary when she was taking a walk. [Who was taking a walk?]

CLEAR When **Joan** was taking a walk, **she** saw Mary. [The pronoun *she* clearly refers to Joan.]

CLEAR When **Mary** was taking a walk, Joan saw **her**. [The pronoun *her* clearly refers to Mary.]

EXERCISE B Rewrite each of the following sentences to make the pronoun reference clear. Some sentences may be revised in more than one way. You need to give only one revision.

Example 1. Our dog and our cat get along, but it doesn't like the neighbor's cats.

Our dog doesn't like the neighbor's cats, but it gets along with our cat.

[In the revised sentence, the pronoun *it* refers clearly to *dog*.]

6. Kevin called Eric after he got a new bike. [Who got a new bike?]

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7. Neither the stove nor the refrigerator is new, but it looks very clean.

8. My mother went with my aunt to her friend's house.

9. I like these paintings of birds; they are so colorful!

10. All of the committees have new members, and they will meet tomorrow.

Another kind of *unclear reference* occurs when a pronoun refers to an antecedent that has been suggested but not expressed. Revise sentences with unclear pronoun references so that every pronoun has a stated antecedent.

UNCLEAR Marcos enjoys reading, and one of them that he likes best is *My Side of the Mountain*. [Which word is the antecedent of *them*? One of *what*?]

CLEAR Marcos enjoys reading **books**, and one of **them** that he likes best is *My Side of the Mountain*. [The pronoun *them* clearly refers to *books*.]

EXERCISE C Rewrite each of the following sentences to make the pronoun reference clear. Some sentences may be revised in more than one way. You need to give only one revision.

Example 1. Erin and Karen are twins, and they enjoy it.

Erin and Karen enjoy being twins.

[The antecedent of the pronoun *it* is not stated. *What* do Erin and Karen enjoy?]

11. Rhonda won a prize for her poetry, and she found it very exciting. [*What* did Rhonda find exciting?]

12. If you wait too long, it might make you miss the bus.

13. When those flowers bloom, it means that spring has finally arrived.

14. Most of the test was easy, but some of them were hard.

15. After David saw the exhibit of photographs, he thought it would be an interesting hobby.
