

LESSON 10

Pronouns

A **pronoun** is used in place of a noun. Sometimes a pronoun refers to a specific person or thing.

Pronouns can help your writing flow more smoothly. Without pronouns, your writing can sound awkward and repetitive. Take a look at the following examples, which show the same sentence written without and with pronouns.

EXAMPLES

- without pronouns** John Roebling dreamed that John Roebling would build a bridge to link Manhattan and Brooklyn, but many people doubted that John Roebling would be able to build the bridge.
- with pronouns** John Roebling dreamed that **he** would build a bridge to link Manhattan and Brooklyn, but many people doubted that **he** would be able to build **it**.

The most commonly used pronouns are *personal pronouns*, *reflexive* and *intensive pronouns*, *demonstrative pronouns*, *indefinite pronouns*, *interrogative pronouns*, and *relative pronouns*.

Type of Pronoun	Definition	Examples
personal pronoun	used in place of the name of a person or thing; can be singular, plural, or possessive	I, me, we, us, he, she, it, him, her, you, they, them, mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs
indefinite pronoun	points out a person, place, idea, or thing but not a specific or definite one	one, someone, anything, other, all, few, nobody
reflexive pronoun	refers back to a noun or pronoun previously used; adds <i>-self</i> or <i>-selves</i> to another pronoun form	myself, herself, yourself, themselves, ourselves
intensive pronoun	emphasizes a noun or pronoun	<i>I myself, he himself, you yourself, they themselves, we ourselves</i>
interrogative pronoun	asks a question	who, whose, whom, what, which
demonstrative pronoun	points out a specific person, place, idea, or thing	this, these, that, those
relative pronoun	introduces an adjective clause	that, which, who, whose, whom

Personal Pronouns

A **personal pronoun** is used in place of the name of a person or thing. Personal pronouns are singular, plural, or possessive.

personal pronouns

singular I, me, you, he, she, him, her, it

plural we, us, you, they, them

possessive my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs, its

Use personal pronouns to refer to yourself (first person), to refer to people to whom you are talking (second person), and to refer to other people, places, ideas, and things (third person).

first person the speaker or speakers talk about themselves: *I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours*

second person the speaker talks about the person talked to: *you, your, yours*

third person the speaker talks about someone or something else: *he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its, they, them, their, theirs*

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Pronouns in Literature

Identify the eight personal pronouns in the following literature passage.

In his twelve years, Aaron had seen all kinds of weather, but he had never experienced a snow like this one. It was so dense it shut out the light of the day. In a short time their path was completely covered. The wind became as cold as ice. The road to town was narrow and winding. Aaron no longer knew where he was. He could not see through the snow. The cold soon penetrated his quilted jacket.

*from "Zlateh the Goat," page 183
Isaac Bashevis Singer*

EXERCISE 2

Understanding Pronouns

Rewrite each of the sentences or sentence pairs. Use pronouns in place of any repetitive nouns or groups of nouns.

1. Our homeroom teacher said we could have a class pet. The pet had to be small and live in a cage.

2. Sarah said Sarah had a friend with some baby gerbils. Sarah knew Sarah could have one.

3. Jake's cousin Ruby had an empty cage. Jake's cousin Ruby would be happy to give the cage to the class.

4. The students were responsible for taking care of the gerbil. The students needed a plan to care for the gerbil.

5. Melanie suggested they make a schedule. Melanie put a student's name by each week on the calendar.

6. Patricia went to the school library for information about small animals. Patricia brought back three books about small animals.

7. Jake brought in the cage. Jake also brought a water bottle, bedding material, and a food dish.

8. All they needed was gerbil food. Jan offered to bring gerbil food.

9. Finally, Sarah brought in the little gerbil. Sarah settled the gerbil in the gerbil's new home.

10. The gerbil scampered around so fast! The class named the gerbil Speedy.

EXERCISE 3

Using Pronouns in Your Writing

Write a paragraph, to be shared with classmates, that tells the story of a particularly good or bad day. It can be a true story or one that comes from your imagination. Begin your story with this sentence: "The first day of summer was better (or worse) than I expected." Use at least five different personal pronouns in your paragraph.
