

INSTITUTE WRITING PROGRAM

THE WRITING CENTER

Pronouns (Advanced)

A **pronoun** takes the place of another noun, called the **antecedent**. The first things that come to mind when you think of pronouns are probably personal pronouns—I, she, he, it, etc. There are, however, a variety of words that are considered pronouns, corresponding to an equally wide variety of grammatical functions. Some of these include:

Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns replace nouns and noun phrases and are **subjective**, **objective**, or **possessive**. They must agree in case and number with their antecedents.

<i>Subjective:</i>	I	we	you	he	she	it	they
<i>Objective:</i>	me	us	you	him	her	it	them
<i>Possessive:</i>	my	our	your	his	hers	its	their
	(mine)	(ours)	(yours)	(his)	(hers)		(theirs)

Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used when the antecedent is the subject of the sentence: “I helped myself to some cookies.”

<i>1st person</i>	myself	ourselves
<i>2nd person</i>	yourself	yourselves
<i>3rd person</i>	himself	
	herself	themselves
	itself	

Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns indicate number and proximity of a noun or noun phrase.

<i>Near</i>	this	these
<i>Distant</i>	that	those

Demonstrative pronouns are often used with the noun they describe: “These cookies taste great.” They can also replace the noun completely: “I don’t always like cookies, but these taste great.” However, the pronoun must have a clear antecedent, otherwise there is likely to be confusion: “My friend has a lot of strong opinions about cookies. This doesn’t surprise me.”

Interrogative pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are questions words that produce information questions. These include *who* (*whose*, *whom*), *which*, and *what*. Often, interrogative pronouns are used at the beginning of a question: “What kind of cookies are you making?”



Relative pronouns

The relative pronouns are similar to interrogative pronouns—they include *who*, and *which*, as well as *that*. Relative pronouns introduce clauses that modify the nouns that are the antecedents of these pronouns. When the relative pronoun is *who* (or *whom/whose*), the case of the pronoun is determined by the role it plays in its own clause:

- The person who baked the cookies isn't here. (*Who* replaces “person” and is the subject of the relative clause, “who baked the cookies.”)
- The person whose cookie recipe I used owns a bakery. (*Whose* again replaces “person,” but it also functions as a determiner for “cookie” in the clause “whose cookie recipe I used.”)

One frequent point of confusion is the difference between *that* and *which* when used in a relative clause. *That* is generally subjective or objective, never possessive, and can often be omitted when it is used in the objective position:

- The cookies that I baked yesterday weren't very good.
- The cookies I baked yesterday weren't very good.

Relative clauses that use *that* are usually **restrictive clauses** that define the noun they modify, rather than simply commenting on it. *Which* is often used in **nonrestrictive clauses** that comment on the noun they modify. Nonrestrictive clauses are set off by commas, while restrictive clauses are not. Another way to think about this difference is as being between clauses that are essential to the meaning of the sentence and those that are nonessential.

- The cookies that I baked yesterday weren't very good. (The clause, “that I baked yesterday,” defines cookies—it provides information essential to the meaning of the sentence.)
- This cookie recipe, which I got from the Internet, uses too much butter. (The clause, “which I got from the Internet,” comments on the noun it modifies, “cookie recipe.” The fact that I got the recipe from the Internet is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.)

Indefinite pronouns

The category of indefinite pronouns is quite large and includes qualifiers, universals, and partitives.

enough	many	all	either
few	much	both	neither
fewer	several	every	none
less	more	each	none
little	most	any	

The pronouns *every*, *any*, *no*, and *some* can be expanded with *-body*, *-thing*, and *-one*:

	body		body
some	thing	every	thing
	one		one
	body		body
any	thing	no	thing
	one		one