



Demonstrative pronouns: Demonstrative pronouns demonstrate: *this, that, these, those*. *This is the dog I like. That is the way to the ruins.* Note that if we said “*this dog*,” then *this* would be a demonstrative adjective, not a pronoun.

Indefinite pronouns: The indefinite pronouns such as *someone, somebody, nobody, no one*, and *anyone* refer to someone or something that is not specified; they do not have antecedents as subject pronouns do. They can be the subjects of sentences: *Everyone is laughing. Nobody got to go.* In such cases the indefinite pronoun is not taking the place of a noun; it is referring to an unspecified element. The indefinite pronouns ending in *-one* and *-body* are singular.

Relative pronouns: A relative pronoun is a pronoun that relates an adjective clause to a main clause; more about this later. The relative pronouns are *who, whose, whom, which*, and *that*. The relative pronouns often begin short adjective clauses that interrupt main clauses. *The girl who sold the flowers smiled shyly.*

Who or whom? *Who* is a subject, and *whom* is an object. *The architect who designed the building was Brunelleschi. She helped whom?*

Reflexive pronouns: A reflexive pronoun is a *-self* or *-selves* pronoun that reflects back to a word used previously in the sentence. *I found myself deep in contemplation.*

Intensive pronouns: An intensive pronoun is also a *-self* or *-selves* pronoun, but it is used to intensify the emphasis on a preceding noun, usually the subject. *I myself think it is correct.*

Summary: Types of Pronouns

Subject: I, you, he, she, they, it, we, you, they

Object: me, you, him, her, them, it, us, you, them

Possessive: mine, yours, his, hers, theirs, its, ours, yours, theirs

Interrogative: who, whose, whom, which, what

Demonstrative: this, that, these, those

Indefinite: anyone, anybody, each, all, everybody, nobody, nothing, no one, one, etc.

Relative: who, whose, whom, which, that

Reflexive: myself, yourself, himself, herself, themselves, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves

Intensive: myself, yourself, himself, herself, themselves, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves



Can we agree?

Pronoun/antecedent agreement in number: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number. If the noun is singular, the pronoun must be singular also.

Sophocles wrote dozens of plays; **he** was a contemporary of Euripides and Aeschylus.

The **soldiers** found Archimedes; **they** did not recognize the famous old man.

Holmes and Watson investigated the case; **they** solved the mystery in the end.

If **Hemingway or Fitzgerald** is here, let **him** in.

If **Hemingway and Fitzgerald** are here, let **them** in.

Pronoun reference problems: One of the most common problems new writers have with grammar is the **pronoun reference error** (ref). The crux of the problem lies in pronouns not doing what we intend them to do. We intend them to refer to their antecedents. In other words, a pronoun is supposed to indicate the noun it replaces. We say *he* instead of saying *Socrates*, or we say *it* instead of saying *the conservancy*. As long as it is clear what noun the pronoun means, everything is fine. But what if the reference is not clear? Here are a few common pronoun reference errors:

The **missing antecedent**, in which there is no antecedent noun to which the pronoun can refer. (An example is beginning the first paragraph of a term paper with “*He* began life as a street urchin.” He who?) The pronoun cannot precede its antecedent.

The **ambiguous reference**, in which there are multiple nouns to which the pronoun might refer. (*Mary Shelley followed in the footsteps of her mother, but **she** did not write prolifically.* Who did not write as prolifically, Mary Shelley or her mother?)

The **ghost demonstration** error, in which we use the demonstrative pronoun *this* as a subject of a clause, assuming incorrectly that readers understand what *this* refers to. The ghost demonstration error could cause vagueness or ambiguity, or it could be based on a missing antecedent. (***This** became my new routine.... This what?*)

This is vague...