2

Pronouns and Determiners

Pronouns stand in for nouns so that we do not have to repeat them: *Maria lost **her** keys, but **she** found **them** later.* Determiners (*this, some, every, my* . . .) come before nouns and specify which or how many.

2.1 Personal pronouns

	Subject	Object	Possessive adj.	Possessive pron.
1st sg.	I	me	my	mine
2nd sg./pl.	you	you	your	yours
3rd sg. masc.	he	him	his	his
3rd sg. fem.	she	her	her	hers
3rd sg. neut.	it	it	its	—
1st pl.	we	us	our	ours
3rd pl.	they	them	their	theirs

- Subject pronouns perform the action: ***She** called **him**.*
- Object pronouns receive the action or follow prepositions: *Come with **me**. Give it to **us**.*
- Possessive adjectives modify a noun (***my** car*); possessive pronouns replace one (*that car is **mine***).

Common Error

- ✗ *Me and John went to the cinema.* → ✓ *John and I went to the cinema.* (subject position)
- ✗ *They invited my wife and I.* → ✓ *They invited my wife and me.* (object position — this hypercorrection is extremely common; test by dropping the other person: *they invited **me***, not **they invited I*)
- ✗ *Its a beautiful day.* → ✓ *It's a beautiful day.* (*it's* = *it is*; *its* = possessive)
- ✗ *The dog wagged it's tail.* → ✓ *. . . its tail.*

Usage Note

Singular *they* is now standard for a person of unknown or unspecified gender: *Someone left **their** umbrella — I hope **they** come back for it.* This usage is centuries old (Shakespeare, Austen) and is accepted by all major style guides.

2.2 Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

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

- Use a reflexive when subject and object are the same person: *She taught **herself** Italian. I cut **myself**.*
- Use it for emphasis: *The director **himself** apologized.*
- *by + reflexive* = alone / without help: *He built the shed **by himself**.*
- Reciprocal pronouns express two-way action: *They love **each other**. The teammates trust **one another**.*

Common Error

Do not use a reflexive as a polite substitute for *I/me*: ✗ *Please contact myself or my colleague.* → ✓ *Please contact me or my colleague.*

2.3 Demonstratives: *this, that, these, those*

	Near (here, now)	Far (there, then)
Singular	this	that
Plural	these	those

***This** coffee (in my hand) is cold. **That** house (across the street) is for sale. **These** days people work from home. Do you remember **those** summers at the lake?*

Demonstratives also point within a conversation: *He resigned without notice — **that** surprised everyone.*

2.4 Quantifying determiners

2.4.1 *some* and *any*

- *some*: positive statements, offers, and requests — *We have **some** milk. Would you like **some** tea? Could I have **some** water?*
- *any*: negatives and open questions — *We don't have **any** milk. Is there **any** coffee?*
- *any* in positives means "it doesn't matter which": *Take **any** seat you like.*

2.4.2 *much, many, a lot of, (a) few, (a) little*

	With countable plurals	With uncountables
Large quantity	many, a lot of, lots of	much, a lot of, lots of
Small quantity (positive: "some")	a few (*a few friends*)	a little (*a little time*)
Small quantity (negative: "almost none")	few (*few friends*)	little (*little time*)

Key Point

A few and *a little* are positive (= some, enough); *few* and *little* without *a* are negative (= not enough). Compare: *She has **a few** friends here, so she's happy.* vs. *She has **few** friends here, so she's lonely.*

Usage Note

In everyday affirmative sentences, *a lot of* is more natural than *much/many*: *We got **a lot of** rain* rather than *We got much rain*. *Much* and *many* are most at home in questions, negatives, and formal writing.

2.4.3 *each, every, all, both, either, neither*

- *every* + singular noun, singular verb: ***Every** student **has** a locker.*
- *each* emphasizes individuals one by one: ***Each** answer is worth two points. Each of the answers **is** worth two points.*
- *all* + plural/uncountable: ***All** children need sleep. **All** (of) the money was spent.*
- *both* = the two together; *either* = one of the two; *neither* = not one and not the other: ***Both** answers are correct. **Either** road leads to town. **Neither** option appeals to me.*

2.5 Indefinite pronouns

somebody/someone, something, anybody/anyone, anything, everybody/ everyone, everything, nobody/no one, nothing

Key Point

Indefinite pronouns take a *singular* verb, even *everybody*: *Everybody **was** there. Nothing **happens** here. Someone **has** taken my seat.* (But follow-up pronouns are commonly plural: *Everybody enjoyed **themselves**.*)

Common Error

Avoid double negatives with negative pronouns: ✗ *I didn't see nothing.* → ✓ *I didn't see anything.* / ✓ *I saw nothing.*

Exercises

Exercise 2.1 Choose the pronoun

Choose the correct form.

1. Between you and (I / me), the plan won't work.
2. My brother and (I / me) grew up in Leeds.
3. The committee gave the award to Sarah and (he / him).
4. Everyone must bring (his or her / their) own laptop.
5. The cat licked (its / it's) paws.

Exercise 2.2 some/any, few/little

Fill the gap with *some, any, a few, few, a little,* or *little*.

1. Hurry — we have very _____ time before the train leaves.
2. Could you lend me _____ money until Friday?
3. There aren't _____ tickets left for tonight.
4. Don't worry, we still have _____ minutes to spare.

5. _____ people ever read the terms and conditions, which is a pity.

Exercise 2.3 Error correction

Each sentence contains one error. Correct it.

1. Neither of the answers were correct.
2. Please send the report to myself by Friday.
3. Every employees must complete the training.
4. This shoes are too small for me.
5. If anyone calls, tell him I'm in a meeting. (make it neutral and natural)