

*Looking more closely at nouns*

*Nouns are words that name: Grammarians have come up with different groupings:*

Common (words for types of things, people, and places)

Proper (nouns that serve as the name for a specific person, place, or thing)

Collective (denoting a group or collective – *flock, band, the Eagles*)

Abstract (referring to something conceptual – *sadness, euphoria*)

Concrete (describing things that can be sensed – *cat, cookie, mom*)

Mass (denoting something that cannot be counted – *sugar, sand*)

Compound (made up of two or more nouns – *high school, battlewagon*)

You might also mention verbal nouns (gerunds). We will save our discussion of verbal nouns (gerunds) for verbs and verbals.

I am not overly concerned about these classifications, and I don't think you should be, but they do make sense.

The subject of a sentence may have a noun in it (or a pronoun), but not all nouns are subjects. Nouns have many uses:

subject complement of verb

direct object of verb

indirect object of verb

object complement (when a noun)

subject complement (predicate noun)

object of preposition

appositive (*Jane, the troublemaker, walked into the room.*)

in direct address (*Jane, please clean your room.*) – a cross between subject,

appositive & subject complement?)

The grammarian winced. (subject)

The grammarian threw Tom the text. (indirect object, direct object)

The grammarian is a scholar. (subject complement–predicate noun)

The grammarian pronounced Tom his pupil. (direct object, object complement)

The grammarian threw the text to Tom. (object of preposition) (notice relationship between i.o. and this prep. phrase)

The grammarian, poor soul, needed more time to study. (appositive)

Do not forget, grammarians, the test is approaching. (direct address)

## *Hearse*

### *Declension & Conjugation*

Old English (Anglo-Saxon, which developed in the 400s and 500s) was a heavily declined and conjugated language. Nouns, pronouns and adjectives had different endings depending on their use in a sentence – as subject, indirect or direct objects, and so forth – in other words they declined by case. Verbs and adverbs changed their endings, they were conjugated, depending on tense, person, number, and voice. Word order was nearly insignificant (at least technically); there were no such things as prepositions. Changing word endings, suffixes (and sometimes prefixes), showed how a noun was to be used (its declension) or a verb (its conjugation).

Some of these complexities fell away during the Anglo-Saxon period under the influence of competing Norse languages. More fell away during the Middle English period, leaving few by the time of the early modern English period.

Anglo Saxon c. 500 – c. 1100 (b. Hastings, 1066)

Middle English c. 1100/1250 – c. 1500

Early Modern English c. 1500 – c. 1700

Some of the complexities of verb conjugation remain (past, present, participial forms) but helping verbs have taken most of the starch out of a formerly complicated system.

Some noun/pronoun declensions remain as well. Nouns and pronouns are declined as one of three cases:

subject (subjective, nominative)

object (objective)

possessive

### *Case*

The property of a noun or a pronoun that indicates its relation to other words in the sentence. Case denotes (it marks) whether a noun or pronoun is functioning as subject, object, or is possessive. The difficulty is that most nouns no longer *show* case, except for the possessive case. English has lost the complexity it previously had.

*So, how do we identify the case of a noun?* By its use within the sentence.

If a noun or pronoun functions as a subject, it must be in the subject case; if it acts as an object (of any sort), it must be in the object case; if it demonstrates possession (and very well might have an apostrophe), it is in the possessive case.

The possessive case is interesting. Usually we define possessives as *showing possession* and identify the apostrophe as signaling possession. But many subtle concepts other than possession can be signaled:

the cat's paw, Johnson's dictionary, Ken's umbrella (physical ownership—even here though, the degree of possession varies)

the teacher's directive, Timothy's shame, Mug Mug's ambition (showing action or feeling)

the student's defeat, my grandmother's death, Pike's pursuers (showing association)

an hour's delay, a day's journey, a week's vacation (showing measure)

yesterday's newspaper, duty's call, for pity's sake (god knows, miscellaneous)

Such possessive constructions do have the similarity that they are the equivalent of phrases with the preposition *of*.

*Check out the following*

*his* skate

the *kid's* skate

the young *kid's* skate

*his* is clearly an adjective. How does *kid's* function differently from *his*? How about *young*? I want to call *young* an adjective, but if it modifies *kid's* should I call it an adverb? **Isn't grammar fun.**

## Pronouns

To simply say pronouns are words that rename or replace nouns is to give them short shrift. There are several, relatively distinct categories:

- personal
- reflexive (with intensifying and reciprocal as subcategories)
- relative
- interrogative
- demonstrative
- indefinite

Consider the complexity of case for the personal pronouns.

**Personal Pronouns** retain some of the complex declension found in Old English and, to a lesser degree, Middle English nouns and pronouns.

They are declined for person (1st=person speaking, 2nd=person spoken to, 3rd=person or thing spoken about), gender (in the third person) and case.

	1st	2nd	3rd
<b>Singular</b>			
Subject	I	you	he, she, it
Object	me	you	him, her, it
Possessive	my, mine	your, yours	his, her, hers, its
<b>Plural</b>			
Subject	we	you	they
Object	us	you	them
Possessive	our, ours	your, yours	their, theirs

### Examples

#### Subject

*He* is lonely. *They* knew [what *they* wanted.]

### **Predicate Noun**

It must have been *she*. Was it *he* who told you? It is *I*.  
This is *she*.

### **Direct Object**

Tom knows *her*. Have you seen *them*?

### **Indirect Object**

Give *him* your address. She showed *me* another way.

### **Object of a preposition**

Are you coming with *me*? Nothing can come between *us*. Nothing can come between *you* and *me*.

Notice that certain possessive forms (*my*, *our*, *your*, *their*), while commonly listed under pronouns, are never used that way. They act as adjectives:

It was *my* donut.

I named *their* grammar the best. [note the object complement]

### **Reflexive (also known as Compound Personal Pronouns)**

Certain possessive and objective forms combine with *self* or *selves* to make compound personal pronouns: *myself*, *ourselves*, *yourself*, *yourselves*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *themselves*.

These forms can be used as **reflexive** or **intensifying** pronouns.

The reflexive construction shows the action of a verb returning to the subject:

I enjoyed *myself*.

She woke *herself*.

They conducted *themselves* well. Behave *yourself*.

The intensifying construction is used for emphasis, and usually appears immediately after the noun or pronoun it emphasizes:

I *myself* saw the cat.  
The captain *himself* didn't know what to do.  
The car *itself* was undamaged.

How would you describe the third pronoun in the following sentence?

She did it *herself*. [It is intensifying but appears to be used reflexively – sort of a cross?]

Be careful to avoid falsely pompous constructions using these pronouns:

Harry and myself were present. (Use *I* instead)  
The cat was given to Chris and myself. (Use *me* instead)

## Reciprocal Pronouns

*each other* and *one another* are called reciprocal pronouns, since they express a relationship back and forth. Grammatically, the two words are considered as one word.

## Relative Pronouns

Two categories: *definite* relative pronouns and *indefinite* relative pronouns.

The definite relative pronouns are *who*, *which*, and *that*. *Whom* is the objective case form of *who*; *whose* is the possessive case: *who*, *whom*, *whose*.

These pronouns occur in constructions called *relative clauses*. A clause, as you know, is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. A definite relative clause depends upon a word or words in the main clause:

The man *who stole the car* has been caught.

*The man has been caught* is the main clause. The relative clause is used as an adjective to modify the noun *man*. Notice that the relative pronoun *who* does double duty: it is the subject of *stole* in the relative clause; it also stands for the noun *man* and connects the relative clause to this noun.

The choice of *who* or *whom* depends on its construction **within** the relative clause.

The man *whom you accused* is not guilty.

The grammarian *to whom I spoke* was very helpful.

Here the relative pronouns serve as objects, of the verb *accused* and of the preposition *to*; therefore the objective form is used.

Compare:

whom you accused  
who accused you

*Whose*, the possessive form of *who*, is commonly used as an adjective.

The woman *whose house I rented* is my cousin. (*Whose* modifies *house*)

The relative pronouns *which* and *that* do not have case changes.

The wind [*that* comes in spring] . . . (subject)  
The house [*that* Tom built] . . . (direct object)  
The book [*to which* he referred] . . . (obj. of prep)

### Indefinite Relative Pronouns

Definite relative pronouns have antecedents in the main clause and are adjectival. When used without antecedents, relative pronouns are called *indefinite*.

The common indefinite relative pronouns include: *who* (*whom*, *whose*), *which*, *what*, *whoever* (*whomever*), *whatever*.



I can guess [*whom* you're referring to.]  
I know [*whose* it was]  
[*What* I think] doesn't seem to matter.  
[*Whoever* comes] will be welcome  
He does [*whatever* he likes.]

*Notice that the relative clauses in these sentences are not used as adjectives but as nouns.*

While the the distinction of definite and indefinite relative pronouns is important, in the end, it is useful to memorize all relative pronouns (regardless of definite and indefinite distinctions:

Who, whom, whose  
That  
Which  
What  
Whoever, whomever, whosever

### **Interrogative Pronouns**

The forms *who* (*whom*), *which*, and *what* may introduce questions. When they do, they are described as interrogative pronouns.

*Who* told you that story? *Whom* has he selected? *Which* do you prefer?  
*What* is the price of beans?  
I want to know *who* told you that lie.

Notice:

*Who* did you take to the party? (colloquial)  
*Whom* did you take to the party? (formal)

## **Demonstrative Pronouns**

The demonstrative pronouns are *this, that, these, those*. They are usually defined as pronouns that point.

*This* is the answer.

*Those* were the days.

*That* was too much.

Notice the similarities and differences between demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives.

*This* is my book. Are *those* the pictures? (pronouns)

*This* book is mine. Did you take *those* pictures? (adjectives)

## **Indefinite Pronouns**

These are the pronouns that cause some agreement trouble.

Singular: anybody, anyone, anything, everybody, everyone, everything, somebody, someone, something, another, each, either, neither, nobody, nothing, none, one.

Plural: all, any, both, enough, few, more, none, plenty, several, some.

*complacence vs. complaisance*

Look these up in the *OED*.