

Pronouns

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Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. They provide a shortcut to avoid repeating any persons, places, or things. Some examples of pronouns include *his*, *her*, *she*, *he*, *their*, and *it*.

Examples

- Melina is writing a letter to her mother. (*Her* stands in for *Melina's*.)
- When Jack and Jill fell down, they had to go to the hospital. (*They* stands in for *Jack and Jill*.)

Rules to follow when using pronouns

Each pronoun must obey the following conventions:

- Agree in person, gender, and number with the noun it replaces.
 - Provide Samantha with *her* class schedule.
 - Provide the students with *their* class schedules.
- For clarity, pronouns often appear after the specific noun to which it is referring (or the *antecedent*).
 - The car was damaged after it hit a pole. (*It* clearly refers to *car*.)
 - After the car hit a pole it was damaged. (It is unclear whether *it* refers to *car* or *pole*.)

Errors encountered when using pronouns

When referring to a company or institution, use the pronoun *it*

- Incorrect: Saint Mary's University accepts letters of appeal from *their* students.
- Correct: Saint Mary's University accepts letters of appeal from *its* students.

Only use the pronoun *you* when referring to one specific person

- Incorrect: In the 1900s, *you* were not able to vote.
- Correct: In the 1900s, *women* were not able to vote.

Depending on how they are used, pronouns ending with *-self* or *-selves* can be either **reflexive** or **intensive**. Use reflexive pronouns like *myself*, *yourself*, or *themselves* as the object of a verb or preposition, and not the subject of a sentence. When used as intensive pronouns, these same words reinforce the subject of a sentence.

- Incorrect: *Myself* and Adam bought movie tickets.
- Reflexive: I bought *myself* a movie ticket. *Or* I bought a movie ticket for *myself*.
- Intensive: I bought the tickets *myself*. *Or* *I myself* bought the tickets.

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Practice: Pronouns

Rewrite the following paragraph for correct pronoun usage. If it is unclear to who or what the pronoun is referring, replace it with a noun.

Me and Mary decided to volunteer to do research projects. Josh wanted to go along with us to do them but he was not a Saint Mary's student, and therefore, could not receive any bonus points. Everyone from SMU gets bonus points if they participate in research projects. Her and me went to our first experiment where a person named Mike asked us to fill out a questionnaire. He explained what it was about; he was very informative and reassuring. He and his partner's experiment was well thought out and she enjoyed doing it. Mike wanted valid results for Mike's survey so he did not tell her the real purpose of it until after she completed it. It went well.

Answers:

Mary and I decided to volunteer to do research projects. Josh wanted to go along with Mary and I to do the experiments but he was not a Saint Mary's student, and therefore, could not receive any bonus points. Mary and I went to our first experiment where a person named Mike asked us to fill out a questionnaire. Mike explained what the study was about; he was very informative and reassuring. Mike and his partner's experiment was well thought out and Mary enjoyed doing the experiment. Mike wanted valid results for his survey so he did not tell Mary the real purpose of the experiment until after Mary completed it. The experiment went well.