

personal pronouns

Revise the basics After *be*, we normally use object pronouns: *me, her* etc. *I, she* etc are possible, but they are very formal and unusual.

'Hello. It's *me*.' 'Which is your sister?' 'That's *her* in the blue dress.'

Me, her etc are also normal in informal **short answers** and similar structures.

'We're going home early.' '**Me** too.' 'Who said that?' '**Her**.'

In a more formal style, we prefer **I etc + auxiliary** in short answers etc.

'I am too.' / 'So am I.' 'She did.'

1 Make the words *in italics* less informal.

- ▶ 'Who's got the tickets?' '*Him*.' *He has*.....
- 1 'We're going home now.' '*Us too*.'
- 2 'Somebody ordered a coffee.' '*Me*.'
- 3 'Who needs a taxi?' '*Them*.'
- 4 'Can anybody speak Spanish?' '*Her*.'
- 5 'What's the problem?' '*Him, of course*.'

as, than, except, but (meaning 'except') The grammar is similar after *as* and *than*.

You're nearly as tired *as me*. I think I sing better *than her*.

Less informal: ... *as I am*. ... *than she does*.

And we always use *me, her* etc after **except** and **but**.

Everybody was in time **except us**. I'll go out with anybody **but him**.

It was me/I that ... After *It is/was* etc, there are two possibilities.

It's me that's responsible. (informal)

It is I who am responsible. (very formal)

A more neutral alternative is *I am the one who/that is ...*

2 Change the sentences.

- ▶ I speak English better than her. (Make it less informal.)
I speak English better than she does.....
- 1 Nobody can sing better than I can. (Make it more informal.)
.....
- 2 It was she who caused the problem. (Make it informal.)
.....
- 3 Nobody understood except we. (Correct it.)
.....
- 4 It was he who discovered the solution. (Make it neutral.)
.....
- 5 It was us that got left behind. (Make it neutral.)
.....
- 6 She doesn't panic as easily as me. (Make it less informal.)
.....

double subjects and objects It is usual, and considered more polite, to mention oneself last in a double subject or object.

You and I need to talk. (more normal than *I and you ...*)

I've got tickets for you and me. (more polite than ... *for me and you.*)

In informal speech, *me*, *her* etc are often used in double subjects (especially *me*).

John and me saw a great film last night.

I is also used quite often in double objects.

Between you and I, I don't think we're getting anywhere.

These uses of *I* and *me* etc do not occur in formal writing. Many people feel they are incorrect in speech (especially *I* in double objects), though they are common in standard usage.

3 Normal (N), informal (I), less polite (LP) or wrong (W)?

- 1 John and me are going skiing this weekend. ...
- 2 Me and your brother spent Sunday at the swimming pool. ...
- 3 Between you and I, I think his marriage is in trouble. ...
- 4 This letter is to we both. ...
- 5 Alice is very angry with you and me. ...
- 6 I and Maggie wanted to consult you. ...
- 7 Harry and I are going camping. ...

4 Very formal (F), neutral (N), very informal (I) or wrong (W)?

- 1 It was James what did it. ...
- 2 Pete and me want to talk to you. ...
- 3 It is I who organise the timetable. ...
- 4 She's invited the Smiths and us to dinner on Tuesday. ...
- 5 I can run faster than he. ...
- 6 Who would do a thing like that? Nobody but she. ...
- 7 Will that be enough for you and me? ...
- 8 'Who needs a lift to the station?' 'Us.' ...
- 9 I and your mother is very worried about you. ...
- 10 They were the ones who let everybody down. ...

NOTES

noun + pronoun In written English and formal speech, one subject is enough: we don't repeat a noun with a pronoun.

My parents are retired now. (NOT *My parents, they are retired now.*)

However, structures like this are possible in conversation.

identifying Remember that we use *it*, *this* or *that* when we name people.

'Who's the woman in red?' *It's Claire Lewis.* (NOT *'She's Claire Lewis.'*)

(on the phone) *Hi, this is Mike.* (NOT *I'm Mike.*) *Isn't that Dr Andrews?*

Adjectives can be used with pronouns in a few fixed expressions.

Clever you! Lucky you!

We, *us* and *you* can be used before nouns.

We women know things that you men will never understand.

What's the government doing for us workers, then?

He who ... etc These structures are unusual in modern English.

The person who takes the risk should get the profit. (NOT *He who ...*)

For singular *they* (e.g. *Somebody phoned. They'll call again later.*), see page 139.

For *he* or *she* used for animals, and *she* for boats, cars and countries, see page 132.

reflexives (*myself* etc); *each other* / *one another*

Revise the basics Reflexives have two uses:

1. for an **object** that is the same person or thing as the **subject**

He talks to himself the whole time.

The computer switches itself off after half an hour.

2. for emphasis: to say 'that person/thing and nobody/nothing else'

I got a letter from the Minister himself.

The restaurant itself is beautiful, but the food isn't much good.

Remember the difference between *-selves* and *each other*.

They write to each other every week. (NOT *They write to themselves...*)

One another can be used instead of *each other*. There is no important difference.

1 Put in *me, her* etc, *myself, herself* etc or *each other*.

- 1 We tried to paint the kitchen, but it was a disaster.
- 2 Alice is trying to teach Spanish.
- 3 His parents gave a car when he graduated.
- 4 When you talk to me like that it really upsets
- 5 Franz and Uli speak different dialects, so they sometimes misunderstand
- 6 Jennie is sweet, but I don't get on with her family.
- 7 If Andy ever listened to, he'd realise how silly he sounds.
- 8 'That's a lovely necklace.' Thanks. Phil gave it to

English and other languages Note that some verbs (e.g. *shave, hurry*) are reflexive in some languages, but not in English unless there is a special reason. Compare:

I don't like shaving. (NOT ... *shaving myself*.)

He can't shave himself now that he's broken his arm, so I have to shave him.

2 Put in reflexive pronouns (twice) or – (eight times).

- 1 Hurry! We're late.
- 2 She always takes hours to dress
- 3 I feel very depressed these days.
- 4 Little Annie can nearly dress now.
- 5 I hate washing in cold water.
- 6 I find it hard to concentrate when people are playing loud music.
- 7 The door slowly opened
- 8 The accident wasn't your fault. Don't blame
- 9 They married at 18 and divorced at 21.
- 10 His new book is selling really well.

'Suppose you were an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress; but I repeat myself.'
(Mark Twain)

'Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours.'
(Benjamin Disraeli)

'Poets have said that the reason to have children is to give yourself immortality. Immortality? Now that I have five children, my only hope is that they are all out of the house before I die.'
(Bill Cosby)

'The better I get to know men, the more I find myself loving dogs.'
(Charles de Gaulle)

'Women speak because they wish to speak, whereas a man speaks only when driven to speech by something outside himself – like, for instance, he can't find any clean socks.'
(Jean Kerr)

After prepositions, we use **personal pronouns** unless reflexives are really necessary.

She always takes her dog **with her** when she goes out. (NOT ... *with herself* ...)

BUT He's deeply in love with **himself**.

3 Circle the right pronoun.

- 1 Can you pay? I haven't got any money on *me / myself*.
- 2 We can't come out this evening. We've got Jane's mother staying with *us / ourselves*.
- 3 This isn't for you. I bought it for *me / myself*.
- 4 Joe has no interest in other people. He only talks about *him / himself*.
- 5 She walked slowly out of the room, leaving a hint of expensive perfume behind *her / herself*.
- 6 In her new job she's got eight people under *her / herself*.
- 7 He's one of those people who spend all their time having arguments with *them / themselves*.
- 8 I often talk to *me / myself*. It's the only way I can get intelligent conversation.

NOTES

possessives Reflexives have no possessive forms. Instead, we use *my own* etc.

'Do you need a taxi?' 'No, thanks, I'll use *my own car*.' (NOT ... *myself's car*.)

But **each other / one another** have possessives.

The twins often wear *each other's clothes*.

'elegant' reflexives Sometimes reflexives are used instead of personal pronouns simply because people feel they sound good: more elegant, or important, or polite.

This shouldn't be difficult for a clever person like yourself.

'Who's going to be there?' 'Gary, Rosanne and *myself*.'

Some people feel this usage is incorrect; it is better to avoid it in formal writing.

In itself is a useful expression for contrasting theory and practice.

*There's nothing wrong with the idea **in itself**; it just won't work in our situation.*

subjects *Each other / One another* are not normally used as subjects, but this sometimes happens in an informal style.

*They listened carefully to what **each other** said.*

(More normal: *They each listened carefully to what **the other** said.*)

get Note the use of **get + past participle** in some structures which have a reflexive kind of meaning, especially in an informal style.

*I can **get washed, shaved and dressed** in five minutes if I'm really in a hurry.*

*They **got married** in the village church.*

*I always **get lost** when I go walking in the mountains.*

An old paradox

The village barber shaves all those people, and only those people, who don't shave themselves.

Who shaves the barber?



one, you and they (general meaning)

One and you can mean 'people in general' (including the speaker and hearer). *One* is more formal than *you*, and has a possessive *one's*.

One/You should always try to keep one's/your promises.

You need / One needs a visa to visit the US.

We **don't** use *one* or *you* to talk about **whole groups**.

They speak French in Quebec. OR *French is spoken in Quebec.*

(NOT *One speaks French in Quebec.*)

And *one* and *you* are not used if they could **not apply to the speaker**.

Where Carlos comes from, a child normally starts school at seven.

(NOT *Where Carlos comes from, one/you normally ...*)

1 Correct (✓) or not (X)? Three sentences are right.

- 1 In the 16th century one believed in witches. ...
- 2 One is knocking at the door. ...
- 3 You can never get everything right. ...
- 4 Does one accept euros in Russia? ...
- 5 Can one use euros in Russia? ...
- 6 Do you have to get a special licence to drive a lorry? ...
- 7 What languages does one speak in Mali? ...
- 8 One doesn't allow high-rise buildings in this town. ...

2 Complete these sentences with words from the box, and make them more or less formal.

adequate avoid direct ✓ fit omelette opinions permit ✓ prepared

- ▶ One can't get a ... train from here to Cambridge.

... You can't get a direct train from here to Cambridge.

- ▶ You need to show your ... to park here.

... One needs to show one's permit to park here.

- 1 You have to be ... to do this job.

- 2 Sometimes one must keep one's ... to oneself.

- 3 You need to leave early if you want to ... the traffic.

- 4 One can't make an ... without breaking eggs.

- 5 One can't teach people anything if one isn't ... to learn from them.

- 6 You can't get an ... knowledge of a language in a month.

They (informal) can mean 'the people around' or 'the authorities', 'the government'.

They play a lot of rugby round here. They say she's back in jail.

They're always reorganising. They don't do much for single mothers.

singular *they*

singular *they* *They/Them/Their(s)* have a common **singular indefinite** use, mostly after nouns referring to unidentified people.

*Somebody has left **their** car outside the office. Would **they** please move it?
I had **a friend** who wanted a ticket, and **they** had to queue for six hours.*

1 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 If anybody needs an application form, they can get it from room 6. ...
- 2 When a student goes for their first lesson, they should sign in at the office. ...
- 3 My sister's husband Simon is a mechanic, and they are repairing my car for me. ...
- 4 Some fool has taken my coat and left theirs instead. ...
- 5 Somebody said it wasn't going to rain, but they were quite wrong. ...
- 6 I think Pete has left their umbrella behind. ...
- 7 If anybody calls, tell them I'm out. ...
- 8 If anybody tries to break into this house, they'll get a nasty shock. ...
- 9 If I find out who took my bike I'll kill them. ...
- 10 That man over there used to work with me, but they've lost their job. ...

one(s)

basics We can use **one(s)** to avoid repeating a countable noun.

*'Another slice of lamb?' 'Just a small **one**, please.'*
*I'm going to wear my new earrings: the **ones** I bought in Egypt.*

We **don't** use **one** for an **uncountable** noun.

*There isn't any brown bread. Would you like **white (bread)**? (NOT ... ~~white one~~.)*

If there is **no adjective**, we do **not** use **a** with **one**.

*'What sort of computer have you got?' '**One** that keeps crashing.' (NOT ~~A one~~ ...)*

1 Circle the correct answers and put in words from the box.

buttons goat's olive sea level sharp sun roof throw out transcriptions

- 1 I'm looking for a new car. I'd like *one / a one* with a
- 2 Can you see my coat anywhere? It's *blue one / a blue one / a blue* with red
- 3 I've got too many clothes. I'm going to *ones / the ones* I don't wear.
- 4 'Is that cheese?' 'No, *sheep's / sheep's one*.'
- 5 I need a French dictionary – *big one / a big one* that has phonetic
- 6 Do you sell maps? I need *one / a one* that shows heights above
- 7 I want oil, not *corn / corn one*.
- 8 Have you got a knife – *really / a really* *one*?

2 Give your own answers to the questions. Use *one(s)*.

- 1 What sort of holiday would you like this year?
- 2 What sort of country would you like to live in?
- 3 What sort of books do you like?
- 4 What sort of job would you like?