

Johnson County Community College

PRONOUN CASE

An error in pronoun case occurs when the writer uses the wrong pronoun form for the function intended in the sentence.

A pronoun takes the place of a noun. It refers indirectly to a person, place or thing. Pronouns have inflections for number, case, person, and gender. They can also be identified by their position and function in the sentence.

Types and inflections

A. **Personal**--These pronouns denote person:

the individual who is speaking/first person

the one being spoken to/second person

and the one being spoken about/third person

Personal pronouns are inflected for case (subject or nominative, object or objective, and possessive), number (singular and plural), and gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter).

1. Nominative Case--Used as subject and subject complement

	Singular	Plural
First person	I	we
Second person	you	you who
Third person	he (masc.)	they
	she (fem.)	
	it (neuter)	

Function

Example:

	S	S
Subj.	1. I ran from the thief as fast as I could.	
	SC	
Subj. Comp.	2. It was I who was robbed last night.	

2. Objective Case--Used as direct object and/or indirect object and/or object of the preposition.

	Singular Number	Plural Number
First person	me	us
Second person	you	you whom
Third person	him (masc.) her (fem.) it (neuter)	them

Function

Example:

DO

Direct Object 1. The police surrounded the building and cornered **him**.

IO

Indirect Object 2. The police cautiously gave **him** a chance to surrender.

Object of the Preposition 3. Having taken his gun, the police maneuvered the thief **OP** into the squad car with **us**.

3. Possessive Case--Used as a substitute for a possessive adjective and a noun.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	(my) mine	(our) ours whose
Second person	(your) yours	your (yours)
Third person	his (masc.) (her) hers (fem.) its (neuter)	their (theirs)

Example: The gun is **his**.

The money the thief stole is **mine**.

B. Reflexive pronouns--These pronouns refer to the same thing as another noun or pronoun in the sentence, generally the subject of the sentence.

A list of reflexive pronouns:

myself
yourself
himself
herself
itself
oneself
ourselves
yourselves
themselves

NOTE: There are no such words as *hisself* and *theirselves*.

Example: The thief hurt **himself** when he fell through the window.

C. Intensive pronouns--These pronouns are the same as reflexive pronouns, but rather than referring to another noun or pronoun they emphasize the noun or pronoun they follow. The difference between these two pronouns is primarily in position in the sentence.

Example: I **myself** will never feel safe in that house again.

Wrong: Bill went to the game with Pete and **myself**. (Should be *me*.)

NOTE: An intensive or reflexive pronoun can never be a subject or a part of a compound subject. Do not use a reflexive pronoun as a direct object or object of a preposition when there is no other noun or pronoun in the sentence to which it refers.

Practice Exercises

In the following sentences correct the improper pronoun case.

1. Whom did you say was calling?

2. If it had been us, we would admit it.

3. That is her across the street.

4. He is as tall as myself.

5. Who did your company send to the meeting in New York?

6. Invite whoever you like.

7. The secret must remain between you and I.

8. Richard and him were the last ones hired.

9. They invited her friends and herself to the party.

10. The company moved Tom and I last year.

11. She is smarter than me.

12. When I answered the phone, I said it was me.

13. Bob wants to go with myself.

14. Bill and me were the winners last time.

15. To who were you talking?