

# **Intermediate Reading**

## **Pronoun and Synonym**

### **Session 5**

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## Pronoun and Synonym

### What is a Pronoun?

A pronoun is defined as a word or phrase that is used as a substitution for a **noun** or noun phrase, which is known as the pronoun's antecedent. Pronouns are short words and can do everything that nouns can do and are one of the building blocks of a sentence. Common pronouns are *he, she, you, me, I, we, us, this, them, that*. A pronoun can act as a subject, direct object, indirect object, object of the **preposition**, and more and takes the place of any person, place, animal or thing. So coffee becomes it, Barbara becomes she, Jeremy becomes he, the team becomes they, and in a sentence, *Barbara drinks a cup of coffee every afternoon* could become *she drinks a cup of it every afternoon*, or even *she drinks it every afternoon*, where the *it* would substitute *the cup of coffee*, not just the *coffee*.

Without pronouns, we'd constantly have to repeat nouns, and that would make our speech and writing repetitive, not to mention cumbersome. Without pronouns, *Barbara drinks a cup of coffee every afternoon, she likes to have it before dinner* would be *Barbara drinks a cup of coffee every afternoon, Barbara likes to have the cup of coffee before dinner*. Using pronouns helps the flow of sentences and makes them more interesting

- He
- It
- You
- I
- They
- We
- Who
- Him
- Them

- Whoever
- Anyone
- Something
- Nobody

Pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

Examples:

1. Billy, Caren, and I were playing poker with friends -> **We** were playing poker with friends.
2. Ellie loves watching movies. -> **She** loves watching movies, especially if **they** are comedies.
3. Will Daniel be going to the circus with Sarah? -> Will **he** be going **there** with **her**?

As mentioned, pronouns are usually used to replace nouns, however they can also stand in for certain **adverbs**, **adjectives**, and other pronouns. Almost anytime you refer to a person, animal, place or thing, you can use pronouns to add interest and make your speech or writing flow better.

In nearly all cases, a pronoun must follow an expression called an antecedent. This basically means that a pronoun can only really be understood in the context of prior information about the noun. For example, if we use the pronoun **she** in a sentence, we will only be able to understand it if we know who **she** is, thus an antecedent, perhaps giving the person's name, is usually supplied first. In the example above *Barbara drinks a cup of coffee every afternoon*, if we had never mentioned Barbara

or what she drinks, it would be unclear if we said, *She drinks it every afternoon*. Your reader would be confused and wonder who *she* is and what does she drink, wine, water, lemonade?

Once Barbara has been mentioned, we would use the pronouns **she** and **her** later in the writing in order to stop repeating the proper noun *Barbara* and possessive proper noun *Barbara's*. Barbara went to the restaurant for dinner with **her** (Barbara's) friends. **She** (Barbara) was very hungry, but **her** (Barbara's) friends would not stop chatting. Eventually, Barbara decided to take matters into **her** (Barbara's) own hands and **she** (Barbara) demanded that **they** (Barbara's friends) stop talking.

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Imagine how that sentence would read if it kept repeating **Barbara** and **Barbara's**. Pronouns have acted to make the writing tighter and, arguably, much more elegant. This is just a basic example of the use of pronouns, they act in many ways to help make speech and writing more lucid and dynamic.

## Types of Pronouns

Pronouns can be divided into numerous categories including:

- **Indefinite pronouns** – those referring to one or more unspecified objects, beings, or places, such as someone, anybody, nothing. Notice in the examples below that there is no set position for where an indefinite pronoun will appear in a sentence.

Indefinite pronoun examples:

1. Anyone
2. Somebody
3. Whichever
4. Whoever
5. Other
6. Something
7. Nobody

Indefinite pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- Would **anyone** like a coffee?
- Take **whatever** you like. Jamie took one cookie and Ben took the **other**.
- **Whoever** owns this is in big trouble! I want **someone to move this now**.

Indefinite pronouns can also be used to create sentences that are almost abstract. Examples could include: *this, all, such and something*.

- **All** was not lost.
- **Such** is life.
- **Something** tells me **this** won't end well.
- **Personal pronouns** – those associated with a certain person, thing, or group; all except you have distinct forms that indicate singular or plural number. Personal pronouns are always specific and are often used to replace a proper noun (someone's name) or a collective group of people or

things. Personal pronouns have two main groups, one referring to the subject of the sentence and one to the object. The first is used to replace the subject of the sentence: *I, you, he, she, it, we, you and they*. Notice that **you** is repeated as **you** can be singular, addressing one person, or plural, addressing a group of people.

Personal pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- Jack and David are friends. **They** play basketball together.
- I have more money than **he**
- **We** will be late if **you** don't hurry up.

The second group of pronouns replaces the object of the sentence: *me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them*. Consider the sentence again:

**We** will be late if **you** don't hurry up.

- In the above example, **we** is the subject of the sentence, but **you** is the object. Other examples of pronouns replacing the object:
  - Peter sang the song to **me**.
  - Missing the train will cause **us** to be late.  
She packed **them** tightly in the suitcase.
- **Reflexive pronouns** – those preceded by the adverb, adjective, pronoun, or noun to which they refer, and ending in *–self* or *–selves*. Reflexive pronouns are used to refer back to the subject or clause of a sentence. The list of reflexive pronouns includes: *Myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*. Reflexive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.
  - Count **yourselves**
  - Annie only had **herself** to blame.

Peter and Paul had baked **themselves** cakes.

- **Demonstrative pronouns** – those used to point to something specific within a sentence. There are only four demonstrative pronouns – *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* – but the usage can be a bit tricky at times. **This** and **that** are singular, whereas **these** and **those** are plural. As you may have noticed, there can be some crossover with indefinite pronouns when using *this* and *that*. Demonstrative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.
- I prefer **this**.
- **These** are beautiful, but **those** belong to Danny.
- Did you see **that**?

While it can be confusing, **this**, **that**, **these** and **those** can sometimes be used as demonstrative adjectives. The difference between the two is that a demonstrative pronoun replaces the noun and a demonstrative adjective qualifies the noun.

I prefer **this** *photo*. **These** flowers are *beautiful*, but **those** *vases* belong to Danny. Did you see **that** *rainbow*?

It should be clear that *this*, *that*, *these* and *those* in the example above are not pronouns because they are being used to qualify the noun, but not replace it. A good trick for remembering the difference is that a demonstrative pronoun would still make sense if the word *one* or *ones* followed it in the sentence.

I prefer **this** (one). **These** (ones) are beautiful. Did you see **that** (one)? **Those** (ones) belong to Danny.

- **Possessive pronouns** – those designating possession or ownership. Examples include: *mine*, *its*, *hers*, *his*, *yours*, *ours*, *theirs*, *whose*. Consider the example:
- This cat is **mine**.  
*Mine* is indicating possession, that the cat belongs to me. Incidentally, *this* in the sentence is not a pronoun but demonstrative adjective as it qualifies the noun *cat*. You will find that possessive pronouns often follow phrases that contain demonstrative adjectives.

Possessive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- Are these bananas **yours**?
- This money is **ours**.
- Is the fault **theirs** or **yours**?

- **Relative pronouns** –those which refer to nouns mentioned previously, acting to introduce an adjective (relative) clause. They will usually appear after a noun to help clarify the sentence or give extra information. Examples include: *who, which, that, whom, whose*. Consider the following sentence: The man *who* stole the car went to jail. The relative pronoun *who* acts to refer back to the noun *man*. It acts to open a clause by identifying the man as not just any man, but the one who stole the car. Relative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- The table, **which** sits in the hallway, is used for correspondence.
- The car **that** crashed into the wall was blue.
- This is the woman, **whose** key you found.
- **Interrogative pronouns** –Those which introduce a question. Examples include: *who, whom, whose, what, which*. We can usually identify an interrogative pronoun by the fact that they often appear at the beginning of a question. Interrogative pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- **Who** will come to the party?
- **Which** do you prefer?
- **What** do you need?
- **Whose** clothes are on the floor?
- **Whom** did you tell?

Whom and who are often confused, and even native speakers will use them incorrectly. *Who* will replace the subject of a sentence, whereas *whom* will replace the direct or indirect object. A good tip for deciding which to use is that you can replace who in the sentence with a personal pronoun and it will still make sense. *Who will come to the party? I will come to the party.* The same system would not work for *Whom did you tell? I did you tell.*



- **Reciprocal pronouns** –Those expressing mutual actions or relationship; i.e. one another.

There are just two reciprocal pronouns in English: *one another* and *each other*. They are mainly used to stop unnecessary repetition in a sentence, but also to reinforce the idea that collective and reciprocal actions are happening to more than one person or thing. John and Mary gave *each other* gifts. Using *each other* allows us the sentence to be more efficient than: John gave Mary a gift and Mary gave a gift to John. The countries worked with *one another* on national security. In this example, *one another* works to suggest that the action of working is being reciprocated back and forth by more than one country.

Reciprocal pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- The boxers punched **each other**  
The couple love **one another** deeply

- **Intensive pronouns** – those ending in *–self* or *–selves* and that serve to emphasize their antecedents. These are almost identical to reflexive pronouns, but rather than just referring back to the subject of the sentence they work to reinforce the action. In many cases, the sentence would still make sense without the intensive pronoun. Intensive pronoun examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- I will do it **myself**.
- We made this pie **ourselves**.
- A nation speaks for **itself** through elections.

Notice how the intensive pronoun is working to emphasize the statement. The sentence would still technically be correct without the intensive pronoun, but it adds some important context to its meaning.

## Pronoun Rules

There are a few important rules for using pronouns. As you read through these rules and the examples in the next section, notice how the pronoun rules are followed. Soon you'll see that pronouns are easy to work with.

- Subject pronouns may be used to begin sentences. For example: We did a great job.
- Subject pronouns may also be used to rename the subject. For example: It was she who decided we should go to Hawaii.
- Indefinite pronouns don't have antecedents. They are capable of standing on their own. For example: No one likes the sound of fingernails on a chalkboard.
- Object pronouns are used as direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. These include: you, me, him, her, us, them, and it. For example: David talked to her about the mistake.
- Possessive pronouns show ownership. They do not need apostrophes. For example: The cat washed *its*

## Examples of Pronouns

In the following examples, the pronouns are italicized.

1. *We* are going on vacation.
2. Don't tell *me* that *you* can't go with *us*.
3. *Anybody* who says *it* won't be fun has no clue *what they* are talking about.
4. *These* are terribly steep stairs.
5. *We* ran into *each other* at the mall.
6. I'm not sure *which* is worse: rain or snow.
7. *It* is one of the nicest Italian restaurants in town.

8. Richard stared at *himself* in the mirror.
9. The laundry isn't going to do *itself*.
10. *Someone* spilled orange juice all over the countertop!

## How to Use Synonyms Effectively in a Sentence

A synonym is simply a word that means the same as the given word. It comes from the Greek [“syn” and “onym,” which mean “together” and “name,”](#) respectively. When speaking or writing, one of the best ways to expand your vocabulary and to avoid using the same words repeatedly is to use a thesaurus to find synonyms (similar meaning words). A thesaurus is a general phrase that describes a type of dictionary that provides a list of words that have the same or similar meaning as the word referenced. For example, if you were to look up the word [“beautiful,”](#) you might get a listing of more than thirty words that have similar meanings. There are many forms of a thesaurus from *Roget's Thesaurus*, authored by Peter Mark Roget and published in 1852, to online materials available from companies that specialize in educational resources.

Why is it important to use synonyms in your speech or writing? It is important because synonyms can improve both your oral skills and your writing skills, as noted in the following section.

## **Benefits of Using Synonyms**

Some of the benefits of using synonyms are that they can:

- Make text much more captivating.
- Help avoid dull text.
- Improve communication between you and others.
- Help provide an image in the mind of the reader.
- Help avoid boring and repetitive text.

For example, instead of using the word “beautiful” several times in your text, you might use synonyms such as “gorgeous,” “stunning,” or “ravishing” to better paint a picture of your description. Using just one word repeatedly will ensure that you will lose the attention of your audience simply out of boredom!

It is quite easy to build your arsenal of synonyms, and the list of tools later in this article will help you get started. As with any efforts to [increase your vocabulary](#), it is helpful to keep a journal or list of new words to which to refer. It is also helpful to use those new synonyms often to keep them in your memory. The more you use new words, the more quickly they will come to mind in your oral or written presentations.

## **Avoid Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious issue for writers and editors and is considered copyright infringement. It is particularly serious for academic researchers because plagiarizing someone else’s work in a research document can diminish or even destroy their professional credibility. Any works that you refer to in your writings that are not your original thoughts or ideas should be correctly cited and referenced. Must you always use direct quotations?

Not necessarily, but any part of the original text that you include in your paraphrased text should be in quotation marks.

Paraphrasing allows us to reduce a very lengthy quotation by using fewer words to convey the same message, and it can help avoid the temptation to use too many quotations. This is where synonyms come in handy, but you must be mindful of what words to use.

When paraphrasing, be sure that the words you choose to replace the original idea are true synonyms. For example, the original phrase, “It was a dark day,” could mean more than one thing. It could mean that the weather was gloomy or that the person’s mood was somber and depressed. Be sure that you grasp the original idea and use words that will convey the same meaning.

## **Tools**

Several books and websites can help you build your dictionary of synonyms. One of the most often used publications is *Roget’s Thesaurus*, which is available in both hardcopy and electronically after downloading from an online source. Some more examples are as follows:

- The Visual Thesaurus® is an interactive dictionary that allows you to type in a word for which you want a synonym and then creates “word maps” of related words. It also provides definitions.
- [Thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com) is another interactive reference tool that not only provides <http://www.thesaurus.com/synonyms> and other related words, but also categorizes them based on complexity and length, and whether the word is used formally or informally. The site also features a “word of the day” as an aid for building your vocabulary.

- [Synonyms.net](https://www.synonyms.net) provides synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and even translation of the word into several other languages.
- [Reverso Dictionary](https://www.reverso.net) not only provides synonyms but also translations of a word in other languages.

Learning to use synonyms effectively can help you better communicate your ideas. Clear and concise text using a variety of synonyms can provide your readers with more interesting reading that will hold their interest. After all, this is ultimately the goal in academic writing so that new topics and research can be clearly presented to anyone interested.

## References

<https://www.enago.com/academy/how-to-use-synonyms-effectively-in-a-sentence/>

<https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/grammar-rules/pronouns-2/>