

7 Possessives, personal and reflexive pronouns: my, mine, I, myself etc.

62 Possessive adjectives and pronouns

<u>Possessive adjectives</u>	<u>Possessive pronouns</u>
my	mine
your	yours
his/her/its	his/hers
our	ours
your	yours
their	theirs

Note that no apostrophes are used here. Students should guard against the common mistake of writing the possessive *its* with an apostrophe.

it's (with an apostrophe) means *it is*.

The old form of the second person singular can be found in some bibles and pre-twentieth century poetry:

Thy *thine*

one's is the possessive adjective of the pronoun *one*.

63 Agreement and use of possessive adjectives

A Possessive adjectives in English refer to the possessor and not to the thing possessed.

Everything that a man or boy possesses is **his** thing;
everything that a woman or girl possesses is **her** thing:

Tom's father is his father but

Mary's father is her father.

Everything that an animal or thing possesses is **its** thing:

A tree drops its leaves in autumn.

A happy dog wags its tail.

But if the sex of the animal is known, **his/her** would often be used.

If there is more than one possessor, **their** is used:

The girls are with their brother.

Trees drop their leaves in autumn.

Note that the possessive adjective remains the same whether the thing possessed is singular or plural:

my glove, my gloves his foot, his feet

B Possessive adjectives are used with clothes and parts of the body:

She changed her shoes. He injured his back. (But see also 7 A6.)

C To add emphasis, **own** can be placed after **my, your, his** etc. and after **one's**;

my own room her own idea

own can be an adjective, as above, or a pronoun:

a room of one's own

Note the expression:

I'm on my own = I'm alone.

64 Possessive pronouns replacing possessive adjectives + nouns

A *This is our room or This (room) is ours.*

This is their car. That car is theirs too.

You've got my pen.

You're using mine. Where's your's?

B The expression of *mine* etc. means 'one of my' etc.:

a friend of mine = one of my friends

a sister of hers = one of her sisters

65 Personal pronouns

A Form

		<u>Subject</u>	<u>Object</u>
Singular:	first person	I	me
	second person	you	you
	third person	he/she/it	him/her/it
Plural:	first person	we	us
	second person	you	you
	third person	they	them

The old form of the second person singular is:

thou (subject) *thee* (object)

B Use of subject and object forms

1 **you** and **it** present no difficulty as they have the same form for subject and object:

Did you see the snake? - Yes, I saw it and it saw me. ~ Did it frighten you?

2 First and third person forms (other than it)

(a) **I, he, she, we, they** can be subjects of a verb:

I see it. He knows you. They live here.

or complements of the verb **to be**: *It is I.*

Normally, however, we use the object forms here:

Who is it? ~ It's me.

Where's Tom? ~ That's him over there.

But if the pronoun is followed by a clause, we use the subject forms:

Blame Bill! It was he who chose this colour.

b) **me, him, her, us, them** can be direct objects of a verb:

I saw her. Tom likes them.

or indirect objects:

Bill found me a job. Ann gave him a book. (See 66.)

or objects of a preposition:

with him for her without them to us

66 The position of pronoun objects

A An indirect object comes before a direct object:

I made Ann/her a cake. I sent Bill the photos.

However, if the direct object is a personal pronoun it is more usual to place it directly after the verb and use *to* or *for*:

I made it for her. I sent them to him. (See 88.)

The position rule does not apply to **one, some, any, none** etc.:

He bought one for Ann or He bought Ann one.

He gave something to Jack or He gave Jack something.

B Pronoun objects of phrasal verbs

With many phrasal verbs a noun object can be either in the middle or at the end:

Hand your papers in/Hand in your papers.

Hang your coat up/Hang up your coat.

Take your shoes off/Take off your shoes.

A pronoun object, however, must be placed in the middle:

hand them in hang it up take them off

(See chapter 38.)

67 Uses of it

A it is normally used of a thing or an animal whose sex we don't know, and sometimes of a baby or small child:

Where's my map? I left it on the table.

Look at that bird. It always comes to my window.

Her new baby is tiny. It only weighs 2 kilos.

B **it** can be used of people in sentences such as:

ANN (on phone): *Who is that/Who is it?*

BILL: *It's me.*

Is that Tom over there? ~ No, it's Peter.

C **it** is used in expressions of time, distance, weather, temperature, tide:

What time is it? ~ It is six.

What's the date? ~ It's the third of March.

How far is it to York? ~ It is 400 kilometres.

How long does it take to get there? ~ It depends on how you go.

It is raining/snowing/freezing. It's frosty. It's a fine night.

It's full moon tonight. In winter it's/it is dark at six o'clock.

It is hot/cold/quiet/noisy in this room.

It's high tide/low tide.

Note also:

It's/It is three years since I saw him = I haven't seen him for three years. (See 188.)

(For **it is time** + subject + past tense, see also 293.)

D Introductory **it**

1 **it** can introduce sentences of the following type ('cleft sentences'):

It was Peter who lent us the money, (not Paul)

It's 'today that he's going, (not tomorrow)

it is used even with a plural noun:

It's 'pilots that we need, wit ground staff. (See also 76.)

2 When an infinitive is subject of a sentence, we usually begin the sentence with **it** and put the infinitive later; i.e. we say:

It is easy to criticise instead of

To criticise is easy.

It is better to be early instead of

To be early is better.

It seems a pity to give up now instead of

To give up now seems a pity.

If **it + be** is preceded by find/think (that), the **be** and the **that** can often be omitted:

He thought (that) it (would be) better to say nothing.

We found it impossible to get visas.

3 **it** can be used similarly when the subject of a sentence is a clause. It would be possible to say:

That he hasn't phoned is odd.

That prices will go up is certain.

But **it** would be much more usual to say:

It's odd that he hasn't phoned.

It's certain that prices will go up.

Other examples:

It never occurred to me that perhaps he was lying.

It struck me that everyone was unusually silent.

E **it/this** can represent a previously mentioned phrase, clause or verb:

He smokes in bed, though I don't like it. (it = his smoking in bed)

He suggested flying, but I thought it would cost too much. (it = flying)

F **it** also acts as a subject for impersonal verbs:

it seems it appears it looks it happens

68 **you, one and they** as indefinite pronouns

A **you** and **one**

As subjects, either can be used:

Can you/one camp in the forest?

As objects, **you** is the normal pronoun;

They/ins you for parking offences.

you is more common in ordinary conversation. It is a more 'friendly' pronoun and implies that the speaker can imagine himself in such a position.

one is more impersonal and less often used, though the possessive **one's** is quite common:

It's easy to lose one's/your way in Venice.

The correct possessive form must be used:

One has to show one's pass at the door.

You have to show your pass at the door.

If instead of **one** or **you** we use a singular noun, the possessive adjective will obviously be **his** or **her**:

One must do one's best.

A traveller has to guard his possessions.

B

they

they is used as subject only. **they** can mean 'people':

they say = people say, it is said

They say it is going to be a cold winter.

they can also mean 'the authority concerned', i.e. the government/ the local council/one's employers/the police etc.;

They want to make this a one-way street.

69 Use of **they/them/their** with **neither/either, someone/everyone/no one** etc.

These expressions are singular and take a singular verb. Their personal pronouns therefore should be **he/she** and the possessive adjectives should be **his/her** (**he/his** for males and mixed sexes; **she/her** for females). But many native speakers find this troublesome and often use **they/their**, even when only one sex is involved:

Neither of them remembered their instructions.

Would someone lend me their binoculars?

Everyone has read the notice, haven't they?

No one objected, did they? (See also 51 C.)

70 Reflexive pronouns

A These are: **myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves**. Note the difference between the second person singular **yourself**, and the second person plural **yourselves**. The indefinite reflexive/emphasising pronoun is **oneself**.

B

myself, yourself etc. are used as objects of a verb when the action of the verb returns to the doer, i.e. when subject and object are the same person:

I cut myself.

He can't shave himself.

It is not always easy to amuse oneself on holiday.

Tom and Ann blamed themselves for the accident.

This refrigerator defrosts itself.

Note the change of meaning if we replace the reflexive pronoun by the reciprocal pronoun each other:

Tom and Ann blamed each other. (Tom blamed Ann and Ann blamed Tom, See 53 C.)

C

myself, yourself etc. are used similarly after a verb + preposition:

He spoke to himself.

Did she pay for herself?

Look after yourself.

Take care of yourselves.

I'm annoyed with myself.

He sat by himself, (alone)

She addressed the envelope to herself.

But if the preposition indicates locality, we use the ordinary, not the reflexive, pronouns:

Did you take your dog with you?

They put the child between them.

Had he/Did he have any money on him?

71 **myself, himself, herself** etc. used as emphasising pronouns

myself etc. can also be used to emphasise a noun or pronoun:

The King himself gave her the medal.

self is then stressed in speech.

When used in this way the pronoun is never essential and can be omitted without changing the sense. It usually emphasises the subject of the sentence and is placed after it:

Ann herself opened the door. Tom himself went.

Alternatively it can be placed after the object if there is one:

Ann opened the door herself

or after an intransitive verb:

Tom went himself.

If the intransitive verb is followed by a preposition + noun, the emphasising pronoun can be placed after this noun:

Tom went to London himself or Tom himself went to London.

When it emphasises another noun it is placed immediately after it:

I saw Tom himself. I spoke to the President himself.

She liked the diamond itself but not the setting.

Note the difference between:

I did it myself (It was done by me and not by someone else) and

I did it by myself (I did it without help).