



**RANDOM HOUSE
WEBSTER'S**

**POCKET GRAMMAR,
USAGE, AND
PUNCTUATION**

**RANDOM HOUSE
New York**

Random House Webster's Pocket Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation, Second Edition

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Grammar

PARTS OF SPEECH

The English language has nine basic classes of words, or parts of speech: **nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, determiners, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.**

Words often serve more than one grammatical function, depending on their position, meaning, and use in a sentence. Therefore, the same word can be a different part of speech in different sentences. For example, the word *help* can be either a verb or a noun.

Help as a noun:

The offer of **help** was greatly appreciated.

(Here *help* is the name of something.)

Help as a verb:

They **help** the community by volunteering their time to tutor illiterate adults.

(Here *help* expresses an action.)

Since words can work in different ways, you must determine how the word is functioning within a sentence before you can label it as a specific part of speech. You cannot assume that any word will always be the same part of speech and fulfill the same grammatical function.

Words and phrases from different parts of speech often modify other words and phrases. For instance, an adjective modifies a noun

by describing the noun (a blue hat). An adverb modifies an adjective, a verb, or another adverb by giving more specific information about it (a light blue hat; He spoke quickly; He spoke very quickly).

NOUNS

A *noun* is a word used to name a person, place, thing, idea, state, or quality.

Person	Place	Thing
Mary	library	flowers
Edward	Ontario	mutiny
American	coastline	computer
cousin	Paris	house
Mr. Jones	city	rabbit
Idea	State	Quality
democracy	hunger	integrity
equality	poverty	courage
Hinduism	happiness	sincerity
justice	rage	decency
evil	joy	bravery

Some of the nouns listed above can be further classified into specific types.

Common nouns name any of a class of people, places, or things:

girl
city
river
road

Proper nouns name specific people, places, and things:

Lisa
Vienna
Ohio River
Main Street

Collective nouns name groups of people or things:

team
clan
flock
tribe
pack
committee

Mass nouns name qualities or things that cannot be counted and do not have plural forms:

laughter
sand
valor
exhaustion
anger
wheat

Compound nouns are made up of two or more words. The words may be separate, hyphenated, or combined:

boarding pass
mother-in-law
housework
runaway
airport
schoolroom

PRONOUNS

A *pronoun* is a word that takes the place of a noun.

Ellen has been working on the project for a long time. She spends eight hours a day on it. Her time is well spent, however, as she herself recognizes.

Antecedents

An *antecedent* is the noun, phrase, clause, or sentence to which a pronoun refers. Use a singular pronoun to refer to a singular antecedent and a plural pronoun to refer to a plural antecedent. In the above example, the antecedent of the pronoun *she* is *Ellen*; the antecedent of the pronoun *it* is *project*.

Types of Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to the one speaking, the one spoken to, or the one spoken about. Personal pronouns that refer to the speaker are known as *first-person pronouns*; those that refer to the person spoken to are known as *second-person pronouns*; those that refer to the person, place, or thing spoken about are known as *third-person pronouns*.

Singular

First person	I	me	my, mine
Second person	you	you	your, yours
Third person	he	him	his
	she	her	her, hers
	it	it	its

Plural

First person we us our, ours

Second person you you your, yours

Third person they them their, theirs

Intensive pronouns and reflexive pronouns end in *-self* or *-selves*.

myself	ourselves
yourself	yourselves
himself	themselves
herself	themselves
itself	

Intensive pronouns add emphasis to a noun or pronoun:

I **myself** have never given much thought to the matter.

Mary hung the striped wallpaper **herself**.

Reflexive pronouns show that the subject of the sentence also receives the action of the verb:

I treated **myself** to a new pair of shoes.

Michael kept telling **himself** that it was not his fault.

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask questions. These pronouns do not have to have a specific antecedent.

which what who whom whose

What did you call me for in the first place?

Whom have you called about this matter?

Whose is that?

Relative pronouns are used to tie together or relate groups of words. Relative pronouns begin subordinate clauses.

which what who whom whose

Debbie enrolled in the class **that** her employer recommended.

Charles has a friend **who** lives in Toronto.

Demonstrative pronouns are used to point out nouns, phrases, or clauses. They can be placed before or after their antecedents.

this that these those

This is the book I told you about last week.

That is a perfect place to sit down and have lunch.

Is **that** the house with the Japanese garden in the back yard?

Indefinite pronouns take the place of a noun but do not have to have a specific antecedent. Following is a list of some common indefinite pronouns.

all	everything	none
another	few	nothing
any	little	one
anybody	many	other
anyone	more	others
anything	most	several
both	much	some
each	neither	somebody
either	no one	someone
everybody	nobody	something

Indefinite pronouns can have a specific antecedent or no specific antecedent.

Specific Antecedent

The casserole was so delicious that **none** was left by the end of the meal.

A **few** of the relatives usually lend a hand when my husband undertakes one of his home-repair projects.

No Specific Antecedent

Someone arrived at the party early, much to the embarrassment of the unprepared host and hostess.

Everyone stayed late, too.

CASE

The majority of English words rely on their position within a sentence (not their form) to show their function. The placement of a word determines whether it is a subject or object. Certain nouns and pronouns, however, also change their form to indicate their use.

Case is the form of a noun or pronoun that shows how it is used and how it relates to other words in a sentence.

English has three cases: **nominative**, **objective**, and **possessive**. In general, pronouns take the nominative case when they function as the subject of a sentence or clause and the objective case when they function as the object of a verb or a preposition. Pronouns and nouns take the possessive case to indicate ownership.

Nouns change form only in the possessive case: for example, a **dog's** bone, **Maria's** hair. Some pronouns, in contrast, change form in the nominative, objective, and possessive cases. The following table shows how personal pronouns change form in the three different cases.

Nominative	Objective	Possessive
I	me	my, mine
you	you	your, yours
he	him	his
she	her	her, hers
it	it	its
we	us	our, ours
you	you	your, yours
they	them	their, theirs

Nominative Case

The *nominative case* is sometimes called the *subjective case* because it is used when pronouns function as subjects. The following examples illustrate how personal pronouns are used in the nominative case.

Subject of a Verb

We understand that they will be late.

Neither she nor I will be attending.

Appositive Identifying a Subject

An *appositive* is a word or a phrase appearing next to a noun or pronoun that explains or identifies it and is equivalent to it:

Both physicists, **Marie Curie and he**, worked on isolating radium.

Mr. Brown, **our English teacher**, went on the class trip with us.

Predicate Nominative

The *predicate nominative* is the noun or pronoun after a linking verb that renames the subject. The linking verb *to be* functions as an equals sign: the words on either side must be in the same case.

It is I.

The primary supervisor is **she**.

The fastest runners are **Lenore and he**.

Since the predicate nominative can sound overly formal in speech, many people use the colloquial: It's **me**. It's **her**. In formal speech and edited writing, however, the nominative forms should be used: It must be **he**. The person at the door was **she**, not her husband. This is **she**. In some instances, revising the sentence can produce a less artificial sound.

Predicate nominative

The delegates who represented the community at last evening's town board meeting were **he and I**.

Revision

He and I were the delegates who represented the community at last evening's town board meeting.

Objective Case

The *objective case* is used when a personal pronoun is a direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition.