



PRONOUNS

Personal and Possessive Pronouns

Rather than repeating a noun, you can use pronouns instead.

Personal pronouns	Possessive pronouns
I/me	my
you/you	your
he/him	his
she/her	her
it/it	its
we/us	our
they/them	their

The voters were asked the voters' opinions on the coming election.

↳ ***The voters** were asked **their** opinions on the coming election.*

In formal written English your pronoun should agree with the noun it is replacing. However, some nouns like *student*, *lecturer*, or *child* are tricky because we might not know the gender of the person. You have three possible solutions:

Formal Correct: ***A student who works hard** will pass **his or her** exams.*

Informal Possible: ***A student who works hard** will pass **their** exams.*

Plural subject: ***All students who work hard** will pass **their** exams.*



Related resources:
Checklist of Grammar Problems
Some Rules of 'the'

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When you have several nouns in a sentence, make sure your reader knows which noun your pronoun refers to.



*The low pass rate was caused by poor attendance at lectures.
It should be investigated thoroughly to improve results for next year.*

HINT: Make your meaning clear, adding more information if necessary.



*The low pass rate was caused by poor attendance at lectures. **This level of attendance** should be investigated thoroughly to improve results for next year*



Practice A

Use the correct pronoun or pronouns.

1. The course notes are not available yet, but you can order _____.
2. A student can access _____ results online or by phone.
3. All students will also receive _____ results in the post.
4. The government will release _____ budget next week.
5. Both parents should share looking after _____ child.



Practice B

Make the meaning clear.

1. Some teenagers talk about their parents as if they are idiots.
2. I start work next week, and they want me to wear a uniform.
3. When the students saw their friends, they waved.
4. The chief factors are the rising numbers of litigants and the lack of resources to deal with them. Next year they will be addressed.

Indefinite Pronouns: Each, Every, None, Some, Many etc

Pronouns such as *'each, every, either, neither, anyone, everyone, anybody, none, some, many* are sometimes called indefinite pronouns. Some of these indefinite pronouns are always singular. Others are always plural. Some indefinite pronouns, e.g. **most**, can be either singular or plural depending on the word they refer to.

SINGULAR: another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, little, much, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, other, somebody, someone, something

- ✓ *Another of the students **has** enrolled in the class.*
- Everyone **has** agreed to make a donation.*

These pronouns also take a singular pronoun

- ✓ *Neither of the lecture rooms had **its** heating on*
- Each of the fish **is** in **its** own aquarium.*

This can lead to the same problem as the one we discussed earlier with *student* and *his/her*. The solution is the same.

Formal Correct: ***Each student** received **his or her** results.*

Informal Possible: ***Each student** received **their** results.*

Plural subject: ***All students** received **their** results.*

PLURAL: both, few, many, others and several

- ✓ *Many **have** tried to climb Mt Everest, but few **have** succeeded.*

SINGULAR OR PLURAL: all, any, more, most, none, some

- ✓ *The walls were covered in **wallpaper**, **some** of which **was** peeling away.*
- The **walls**, **some** of which **were** crumbling away, had been painted blue.*



Practice C

Use the correct verb or pronoun (or rewrite).

1. Everyone ____ working hard for their exams.
2. ____ there anybody who ____ answer the question?
3. Each of the politicians ____ campaigning hard in ____ electorate.
4. Each of the exams ____ 40 minutes in length.

5. The lecturers, some of whom _____ bilingual, _____ happy for students to use either language.



Answers A

Use the correct pronoun or pronouns.

1. The course notes are not available yet, but you can order **them**.
2. A student can access **his or her** results online or by phone.
3. All students will also receive **their** results in the post.
4. The government will release **its** budget next week.
5. Both parents should share looking after **their** child.



Answers B

Make the meaning clear. Below are possible answers.

1. Some teenagers talk about their parents as if **all adults** are idiots.
2. I start work next week, and **my employers** want me to wear a uniform.
3. The students waved when they saw their friends.
4. The chief factors are the rising numbers of litigants and the lack of resources to deal with them. Next year **both factors** will be addressed.



Answers C

Use the correct verb.

1. Everyone **is** working hard for their exams.
2. **Is** there anybody who can answer the question?
3. Each of the politicians **is** campaigning hard in his or her electorate.
4. Each of the exams **is** 40 minutes in length.

5. The lecturers, some of whom **are** bilingual, **are** happy for students to use either language.