

Special Problems in Pronoun Usage

Who and Whom

- 7h.** The use of *who* or *whom* in a subordinate clause depends on how the pronoun functions in the clause.

Who and *whoever* are nominative case pronouns. Use them as subjects of sentences and as predicate nominatives. *Whom* and *whomever* are objective case pronouns. Use them as direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of prepositions.

NOMINATIVE **Who** will plant that tree this weekend? [The subject of the sentence, performing the action, is *Who*.]

The winner of the math contest was **who**? [The predicate nominative, which renames the subject, is *who*.]

OBJECTIVE For **whom** are we waiting? [*Whom* is the object of the preposition *For*.]

Whom did Evan call? [*Whom* is the direct object of the verb phrase *did call*.]

Sometimes, the words *who*, *whom*, *whoever*, and *whomever* are used at the beginning of subordinate clauses. (As you may remember, a subordinate clause has a subject and verb, but the clause does not express a complete thought. It is part of a larger sentence.)

EXAMPLES I wonder **who** will work on the project. [The underlined subordinate clause uses *who* as a subject, so the nominative case form is needed.]

Here is a speaker **whom** listeners always enjoy. [The underlined subordinate clause uses *whom* as a direct object of the verb *enjoy*, so the objective case form is needed.]

EXERCISE A Circle the correct form of the pronoun in each sentence below. First, decide how the pronoun functions in the underlined clause.

Example 1. Did you find out (*who*, *whom*) the students elected? [In the clause, the pronoun acts as the direct object of the verb *elected*. Object pronouns use the objective case form.]

1. The athletes (*who*, *whom*) I most admire are strong and intelligent. [Is the pronoun the subject or an object of a verb or preposition?]
2. (*Who*, *Whom*) went with you to the concert? [Is the pronoun the subject or an object of a verb or preposition?]
3. Please tell (*whoever*, *whomever*) shows up that the meeting has been cancelled.
4. (*Who*, *Whom*) will teach your algebra class next year?
5. I called my friend Jenna, (*who*, *whom*) I haven't seen in a year.
6. The best man in the wedding is the one (*who*, *whom*) is wearing a white rose.
7. To (*who*, *whom*) are these flowers being sent?
8. Guess (*who*, *whom*) is at the door!

9. My great-grandfather, about (who, whom) I have often spoken, was born in Africa.
10. The prize will be given to (whoever, whomever) the judges choose.

Appositives

- 7i.** A pronoun used as an appositive is in the same case as the word to which it refers.

An appositive, as you may remember, is a noun or pronoun placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify or describe it.

NOUN APPOSITIVE Maya's sister **Dena** takes violin lessons. [The noun *Dena* identifies *sister*.]

PRONOUN APPOSITIVE The speakers, **he** and **they**, kept the audience entertained. [The pronouns *he* and *they* identify *speakers*.]

Sometimes, a pronoun is followed by an appositive that identifies the pronoun.

EXAMPLES **We** violinists must practice every day. [*We*, the subject pronoun, is identified by the appositive *violinists*. Because *We* is the subject of the sentence, it is in the nominative case.]

Give **us** young musicians credit for being determined! [*Us*, the object of *Give*, is identified as *young musicians* by the appositive.]

TIP ▶ Whether a pronoun acts as an appositive or comes right before an appositive, the key is to make sure that both the pronoun and the noun are in the same case. If you are not sure which pronoun form to use, remove the noun and complete the sentence correctly without it.

STEP 1 (*We, Us*) violinists love to play. [Now, remove the appositive, *violinists*.]

STEP 2 (*We, Us*) love to play. [Which pronoun sounds correct?]

STEP 3 **We** violinists love to play.

EXERCISE B Underline the correct pronoun in each sentence below. If you are not sure what case the pronoun should take, use the previous steps to help you decide.

Example 1. (*Us, We*) We students took a tour of the radio station. [The pronoun serves as the subject of the verb *took* and should be in the nominative case. The noun *students* renames the pronoun. *We* is correct.]

11. Everyone—the teachers and (*we, us*)—visited the radio station this morning. [Is the pronoun the appositive of a subject or an object?]
12. The funny radio hosts especially entertained the teachers, Mr. Holland and (*she, her*).
13. Even so, the many buttons in the control room impressed (*us, we*) all.
14. (*We, Us*) visitors had to stay quiet while the show was being recorded.
15. Remind me to thank the hosts, Karl and (*she, her*), for letting us visit the station.