

Pronouns and possessives

English A1

What this topic teaches

A **pronoun** is a small word that stands in for a name: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*. Chinese has them too – wǒ, nǐ, tā – so the idea is old news. The new part is that English pronouns change shape depending on their job in the sentence.

- One shape for doing the action: *I, he, they*.
- One shape for receiving it: *me, him, them*.
- And two ways to show ownership : *my* before a noun, *mine* standing alone.
- Memory hook: English pronouns have a work uniform and weekend clothes. The word is the same person; only the outfit changes.

Subject pronouns: the doers

The **subject** does the action, and its pronouns are the ones you met with *to be*.

Person	Singular	Plural
first (the speaker)	I	we
second (the listener)	you	you
third (everyone else)	he / she / it	they

- *he* for a man or boy, *she* for a woman or girl, *it* for a thing or animal.
- *you* is both singular and plural. English threw away the difference centuries ago and never looked back.
- △ **I** is always a capital letter , everywhere, always. English has exactly one word this proud.

Object pronouns: the receivers

The **object** receives the action, and English gives it different clothes.

Subject	Object	Example
I	me	She helps me .
you	you	I help you .
he / she / it	him / her / it	I see him .
we / they	us / them	They call us .

- *I help him* and *he helps me* – watch the two shapes swap.
- △ *you* and *it* never change. Lucky words.

- After a **preposition** (with, for, to, between), use the object shape: *Come with **me**. This gift is for **her***. The famous exam favourite: *between you and **me*** – never *between you and I*.

Possessives: my or mine

English shows ownership twice, and the two forms are not interchangeable .

Owner	Before a noun	Standing alone
I	my	mine
you	your	yours
he / she / it	his / her / its	his / hers / its (rare)
we / they	our / their	ours / theirs

- The **possessive adjective** needs a noun after it: *my book, her bag*. It is never alone, like a bodyguard without a client.
- The **possessive pronoun** stands alone: *The book is mine. Mine* already carries the noun inside it, so nothing follows.
- Collision table: *my book* ✓ , *mine book* × , *the book is my* × , *the book is mine* ✓ .
- is *my book*; is *the book is mine*. Chinese uses one little word for both jobs; English changes the word.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **In speech, , and are all tā.** One sound, three words. English forces you to choose *he, she* or *it* out loud, and your listener will notice. This is the most common slip even for advanced speakers, so build the habit now: see a woman, think *she*; see a phone, think *it*.
- △ **The possessive follows the owner's gender, not the object's.** is *his book* (he owns it); is *her book* (she owns it). The book itself has no opinion.
- △ **English never drops the pronoun.** Chinese can say with no subject at all. English cannot: *It is raining*. That empty *it* does no work except keeping the grammar police calm.
- △ *its* (belonging to it) still has no apostrophe. *It's* always means *it is*. The apostrophe rule from topic 1 has not changed its mind.

Say it aloud

Make these true, then say them to a partner.

- My name is _____. This bag is mine.
- She is my friend. I sit next to her.
- They are my classmates. I study with them.
- The cat is cute. Its tail is long.

Now cover the table and answer: *Whose book is this?* – *It's his. It's hers. It's ours.*

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

- 1. ____ *am a student.* – **I**. The doer shape, and always a capital letter.
- 2. *She helps* ____ *every day.* – **me**. She does the action; I receive it, so the object shape.
- 3. *This is* ____ *book. It is* _____. – **my**, then **mine**. The bodyguard needs a noun; the pronoun stands alone.
- 4. *Tā de shū* – **his book** if he owns it, **her book** if she does. The owner's gender decides; the book has no opinion.
- 5. *Between you and* _____, *this grammar is easy.* – **me**. After a preposition, the object shape – *between you and I* is the famous wrong answer.