

4 Personal pronouns

Raphael's painting of the School of Athens includes a portrait of the artist himself.



1 Subject and object pronouns

We do not usually omit pronouns, especially subject pronouns. Equally, we usually don't use a noun + pronoun together as the subject of a verb:

- ✗ ~~Junk emails they have become a nuisance.~~
- ✓ Junk emails have become a nuisance.

Exceptions in spoken and informal English ► Unit 83.2/4



We do not use object pronouns in relative clauses or infinitive phrases if the object has already appeared in the same sentence:

- ✗ ~~That's the play I told you about it.~~ ✓ That's the play I told you about.
- ✗ ~~Those plastic cakes look good enough to eat them.~~
- ✓ Those plastic cakes look good enough to eat.

After *as* and *than*, we use a subject pronoun with an auxiliary or modal verb:

The instructor didn't ski as well as I do/did/can.

If there is no auxiliary or modal verb, we usually use object pronouns:

The instructor didn't actually ski any better than me. They aren't as old as us.

You may hear subject pronouns in this situation, but this can sound very formal or old-fashioned: [*The instructor didn't ski any better than I.*]

FORMALITY CHECK

After *It is* we use the subject pronoun in formal language, and the object pronoun in informal language and short responses:

*It is **they** who asked for the music to be turned down.* (formal)

*It's **them** who asked for the music to be turned down.* (informal)

*'Who's there?' 'It's **me**.'* (informal)

When we have a noun and pronoun, or two pronouns together, we tend to put the speaker last (possibly out of politeness):

***You** and I are both invited to the pro-celebrity golf match, if you fancy it.*

However, if we have a noun and pronoun where the pronoun does not refer to the speaker, we usually put the pronoun first:

*Don't you think we should let **him** and his wife decide when to come?*

We usually use object pronouns after a preposition. In informal English you may hear the subject pronoun, although many people consider this incorrect:

[*They're sending the new consignment over **for** Tom and I to check.*]

✓ *They're sending the new consignment over **for** Tom and **me** to check.*

In some exclamations we modify object pronouns, usually with an adjective, e.g. *Silly **me**!*

We can use a noun after a pronoun to clarify who or what we are referring to:

*I want **you boys** to report to the Principal after this class!*

2 Pronouns *he, she, it* and *one*

We use *he* and *she* to refer to people and often also to animals, especially domestic pets:

*We had to take our cat, Rusty, to the vet yesterday. **He's** got ear mites.*

Use of impersonal pronoun *they* ► Unit 5.1

We use *it* to refer to animals, things, ideas or actions, and not usually to people unless to refer to an unborn or young baby (if the sex is unknown):

*Mary brought her new baby into the shop yesterday – **it's** very cute.*

We can use *one* or *ones* to avoid repeating countable nouns:

*Do you prefer the dark chocolates or the white **ones**?*