

30 Golden Rules of Pronouns

Comprehensive Notes with 3 Examples per Rule

Rule 1: The 231 Order (Positive Sense)

Explanation: When multiple personal pronouns of different persons are used together in a positive or normal sentence, they should follow the order: Second Person (2), Third Person (3), First Person (1).

Examples:

- 1. You, he, and I must work together to finish this project.
- 2. You and she have been selected for the final interview.
- 3. He and I are going to the market this evening.

Rule 2: The 123 Order (Negative Sense or Plural)

Explanation: If the sentence implies a mistake, guilt, confession, or if all pronouns are in the plural form (we, you, they), the order must be First Person (1), Second Person (2), Third Person (3).

Examples:

- 1. I, you, and he are to blame for the company's loss.
- 2. I and he have committed a terrible mistake.
- 3. We, you, and they must leave the building immediately.

Rule 3: Objective Case After Prepositions and Certain Verbs

Explanation: Pronouns following prepositions (between, except, but, like) and the verb 'let' must always be in the objective case (me, him, her, us, them).

Examples:

- 1. Let him and me handle this difficult situation.
- 2. There is no misunderstanding between you and me.
- 3. Everyone attended the seminar except her.

Rule 4: Subjective Case After 'It is' / 'It was'

Explanation: When a pronoun acts as a subject complement after the 'to be' verb (It is, It was), it must be in the subjective case (I, he, she, we, they).

Examples:

- 1. It is I who am knocking at the door.
- 2. It was he who helped me during my toughest times.
- 3. If I were she, I would not accept this offer.

Rule 5: Subjective Case in Comparisons

Explanation: When two subjects are being compared using 'as...as' or 'than', the pronoun that follows must be in the subjective case.

Examples:

- 1. My brother is much taller than I.
- 2. She is as intelligent as he.
- 3. They run faster than we do.

Rule 6: Mandatory Reflexive Pronouns

Explanation: Certain verbs must be followed by a reflexive pronoun (myself, himself, themselves) if there is no other direct object. These include: avail, apply, adapt, adjust, pride, absent, enjoy, avenge, resign.

Examples:

- 1. You should avail yourself of this golden opportunity.
- 2. He absented himself from the mandatory meeting.
- 3. They enjoyed themselves at the summer party.

Rule 7: Verbs That Reject Reflexive Pronouns

Explanation: Certain verbs do NOT take a reflexive pronoun after them. These include: keep, stop, turn, qualify, bathe, move, rest, hide.

Examples:

- 1. You should keep away from bad company. (NOT: keep yourself away)
- 2. He hid behind the large oak tree. (NOT: hid himself)
- 3. She finally qualified for the final round. (NOT: qualified herself)

Rule 8: Reflexive Pronouns Cannot Be Subjects

Explanation: A reflexive pronoun cannot act as the subject or object of a sentence unless preceded by a noun or personal pronoun.

Examples:

- 1. Ram and I will complete this task. (NOT: Ram and myself)
- 2. He invited my sister and me. (NOT: my sister and myself)
- 3. I myself will ensure the work is done. (Correct usage as emphatic)

Rule 9: 'Each' vs. 'Every' Pronoun Agreement

Explanation: Both 'each' and 'every' are singular. When used as subjects, they take a singular verb and a singular possessive adjective (his/her).

Examples:

- 1. Each of the boys has brought his own textbook.
- 2. Every student must submit his assignment on time.
- 3. Each man and each woman has a vote of his or her own.

Rule 10: Either/Neither vs. Any/None

Explanation: 'Either' and 'Neither' are used for exactly two people or things. 'Any' and 'None' are used for more than two.

Examples:

- 1. Neither of his two brothers is going to the party.
- 2. None of his five friends showed up for the match.
- 3. You can choose any of the four options provided.

Rule 11: Reciprocal Pronouns (Each other vs. One another)

Explanation: 'Each other' is strictly used for two subjects interacting. 'One another' is used when more than two subjects are interacting.

Examples:

- 1. The two rival captains shook hands with each other.
- 2. The five family members always support one another.
- 3. Romeo and Juliet loved each other deeply.

Rule 12: Relative Pronoun 'Who' vs. 'Whom'

Explanation: 'Who' is a subjective pronoun (used when the person does the action). 'Whom' is an objective pronoun (used when the person receives the action).

Examples:

- 1. The man who stole the car has been arrested.
- 2. The teacher whom you met yesterday is my uncle.
- 3. I know the boy who won the first prize.

Rule 13: Using 'That' after Superlative Degrees

Explanation: If a sentence uses an adjective in the superlative degree, the relative pronoun 'that' must be used instead of 'who' or 'which'.

Examples:

- 1. He is the most honest politician that I have ever seen.
- 2. This is the best book that is available on the subject.
- 3. She was the most beautiful girl that walked into the room.

Rule 14: Using 'That' after Specific Words

Explanation: The relative pronoun 'that' must follow these specific words: All, Same, Any, None, Nothing, Only, Little, Few, Much.

Examples:

- 1. All that glitters is not gold.

- 2. This is the same pen that I lost yesterday.
- 3. There is nothing that can stop him now.

Rule 15: The Pronoun 'One'

Explanation: When 'One' acts as the subject, it must be followed by its exact possessive form 'one\'s', not 'his' or 'her'.

Examples:

- 1. One should always respect one's parents.
- 2. One must not neglect one's own responsibilities.
- 3. One should keep one's promises.

Rule 16: Possessive Adjectives Before Gerunds

Explanation: A gerund (V1 + ing acting as a noun) must always be preceded by a possessive adjective (my, our, your, his, their) and NOT an objective pronoun.

Examples:

- 1. I do not appreciate your coming late to the office.
- 2. She insisted on his leaving the room immediately.
- 3. My mother hates my staying awake late at night.

Rule 17: Question Tags for Indefinite Pronouns

Explanation: If the subject is an indefinite pronoun (everyone, somebody, no one, anybody), the pronoun in the question tag must be the plural 'they'.

Examples:

- 1. Everyone has finished the test, haven't they?
- 2. Somebody left the door open, didn't they?
- 3. No one came to the meeting, did they?

Rule 18: Pronouns for Collective Nouns

Explanation: A collective noun takes a singular pronoun (it/its) when viewed as a single unit, but a plural pronoun (they/their) when its members are divided or act individually.

Examples:

- 1. The jury has given its final verdict.
- 2. The jury were divided in their opinions.
- 3. The committee decided to submit its report today.

Rule 19: Whose vs. Which

Explanation: 'Whose' is generally used for living beings (and sometimes for inanimate objects with personification), while 'of which' is strictly used for non-living things.

Examples:

- 1. This is the boy whose father is a famous doctor.
- 2. I live in a house the roof of which is leaking.
- 3. She is the artist whose painting won the award.

Rule 20: Pronouns Joined by Conjunctions

Explanation: When two pronouns are joined by 'and' or 'or', they must be in the same case (both subjective or both objective).

Examples:

- 1. He and I are great childhood friends.
- 2. The teacher punished him and me.
- 3. It is a secret between him and her.

Rule 21: The Rule of 'Many a'

Explanation: The phrase 'Many a' is always followed by a singular noun, a singular verb, and a singular pronoun.

Examples:

- 1. Many a soldier has met his death on the battlefield.

- 2. Many a student has forgotten his homework today.
- 3. Many a man has ruined his life due to gambling.

Rule 22: Pronoun Agreement with 'Either...or' / 'Neither...nor'

Explanation: When two subjects are joined by either...or, neither...nor, or not only...but also, the pronoun agrees with the nearest subject.

Examples:

- 1. Either the manager or his assistants failed in their duty.
- 2. Neither the students nor the teacher brought his book.
- 3. Not only Ram but also his friends have left their luggage here.

Rule 23: Pronoun Agreement with 'As well as' / 'Along with'

Explanation: When two subjects are joined by 'as well as', 'along with', 'together with', or 'in addition to', the pronoun agrees with the FIRST subject.

Examples:

- 1. The captain, along with his players, has taken his position.
- 2. The students, as well as the teacher, have submitted their forms.
- 3. My friend, together with his parents, has sold his house.

Rule 24: Relative Pronouns with 'Same' and 'Such'

Explanation: After the words 'same' and 'such', use the relative pronoun 'as'. Use 'that' after 'same' only if the verb is explicitly stated.

Examples:

- 1. He is the same man that came here yesterday.
- 2. This is the same book as mine.
- 3. Avoid such friends as waste your precious time.

Rule 25: Demonstrative Pronoun 'That of' / 'Those of'

Explanation: To avoid repetition of a noun in a comparison, use 'that of' for singular nouns and 'those of' for plural nouns.

Examples:

- 1. The climate of Pune is better than that of Mumbai.
- 2. The streets of Delhi are wider than those of Kolkata.
- 3. The uniform of the army is different from that of the navy.

Rule 26: Possessive 'Its' vs. Contraction 'It's'

Explanation: 'Its' is a possessive pronoun meaning 'belonging to it'. 'It's' is a contraction for 'it is' or 'it has'. They are often confused in error detection.

Examples:

- 1. The dog lost its collar in the park. (NOT: it's)
- 2. It's going to rain heavily tomorrow.
- 3. The company announced its new policy today.

Rule 27: 'Both' is Never Used in Negative Sentences

Explanation: The pronoun 'Both' cannot be used in negative sentences. Instead of saying 'Both of them are not going', you must use 'Neither'.

Examples:

- 1. Neither of them went to the cinema. (NOT: Both of them did not go)
- 2. Neither of the two brothers passed the exam.
- 3. I asked two people the way, but neither of them knew.

Rule 28: Pronoun Case After 'But' meaning 'Except'

Explanation: When 'but' is used as a preposition meaning 'except', the pronoun following it must be in the objective case.

Examples:

- 1. Nobody but him was present at the meeting.

- 2. Everyone but her agreed to the proposal.
- 3. All the boys but me have finished the assignment.

Rule 29: Singular Pronoun with Indefinite Subjects

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns like everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, someone, and somebody take a singular verb and a singular masculine possessive pronoun (his) in formal competitive English.

Examples:

- 1. Everyone should respect his teachers. (NOT: their)
- 2. Anybody can do this if he tries hard enough.
- 3. Someone has left his bag in the classroom.

Rule 30: Plural Pronouns with 'Few, Many, Several, Both'

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns such as few, many, several, and both always take plural verbs and plural possessive pronouns (their).

Examples:

- 1. Many of the candidates have submitted their applications.
- 2. Both of the sisters love their parents dearly.
- 3. Several of the members voiced their objections.