

# 14 Pronouns

Pronouns are words used in place of nouns (see 6).

They are usually divided into the following categories:

Personal pronouns	<b>ich, du/Sie, er/sie/es</b> etc.
Reflexive pronouns	<b>mich, mir, sich</b> etc.
Possessive pronouns	<b>mein, dein, sein</b> etc.
Demonstrative pronouns	<b>der, dieser, jener</b> etc.
Relative pronouns	<b>der, welcher, was</b> etc.
Interrogative pronouns	<b>wer?, was?, welcher?</b> etc.
Indefinite pronouns	<b>man, jeder, mancher</b> etc.

## 14.1 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to people or things and take the same gender (masculine, feminine or neuter), number (singular or plural) and case (nominative, accusative, dative or genitive) as the noun they stand for.

### 14.1.1 Formation

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>accusative</i>	<i>dative</i>
<i>sing.</i>	1. <b>ich</b> <i>I</i>	<b>mich</b> <i>me</i>	<b>mir</b> ( <i>to/for</i> ) <i>me</i>
	2. <b>du</b> <i>you</i>	<b>dich</b> <i>you</i>	<b>dir</b> <i>you</i>
	3. <b>er</b> <i>he/it</i>	<b>ihn</b> <i>him/it</i>	<b>ihm</b> <i>him/it</i>
	<b>sie</b> <i>she/it</i>	<b>sie</b> <i>her/it</i>	<b>ihr</b> <i>her/it</i>
	<b>es</b> <i>it/he/she</i>	<b>es</b> <i>it/him/her</i>	<b>ihm</b> <i>it/him/her</i>
<i>pl.</i>	1. <b>wir</b> <i>we</i>	<b>uns</b> <i>us</i>	<b>uns</b> <i>us</i>
	2. <b>ihr</b> <i>you</i>	<b>euch</b> <i>you</i>	<b>euch</b> <i>you</i>
	3. <b>sie</b> <i>they</i>	<b>sie</b> <i>them</i>	<b>ihnen</b> <i>them</i>

Polite form of *you* (*sing. & pl.*):

<b>Sie</b> <i>you</i>	<b>Sie</b> <i>you</i>	<b>Ihnen</b> <i>you</i>
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Note that the polite *you* is always written with an initial capital.

The genitive forms of these pronouns sound archaic and are generally avoided in modern German; dative forms may be used instead. However, in historical and literary German the following genitive forms do occur:

<i>sing.</i> 1. <b>meiner</b> <i>of me</i>	<i>pl.</i> 1. <b>unser</b> <i>of us</i>
2. <b>deiner</b> <i>of you</i>	2. <b>euer</b> <i>of you</i>
3. <b>seiner</b> <i>of him/it</i>	3. <b>ihrer</b> <i>of them</i>
<b>ihrer</b> <i>of her/it</i>	<b>Ihrer</b> <i>of you (polite)</i>

■ **14.1.2** In most contexts German and English use personal pronouns in a similar way. However, there are some points to note:

**a** In German, the grammatical gender of a noun may not correspond with its natural gender. The pronoun always follows the grammatical gender:

Ich sehe **es** (das Kind) *I don't see him/her (the child) any more.*

**b** Indirect objects in German never require a preposition: Kaufst du es **ihm** (dem Vater)? *Are you buying it for him?*

Sie gab es **ihr**. *She gave it to her.*

**c** People may be addressed either by the familiar **du** (*sing.*) and **ihr** (*pl.*) or by the polite and more distant **Sie**. There are no strict rules about when to use one or the other, but the following guidelines are usually observed:

- **du** and **ihr** are used when talking to children (up to about 14), friends and relatives.
- **Sie** is used in formal business contexts, when talking to acquaintances and strangers and by children talking to adults outside the family.