

Chapter 9: MORE PRONOUNS

In Part One, we had a look at subject pronouns (*je, tu, il* etc); object pronouns, both direct (*le, la, les* etc) and indirect (*lui, leur* etc); reflexive pronouns (*me, te, se* etc); stressed/disjunctive pronouns (*moi, toi* etc); and the *qui* and *que* relative pronouns.

Pronouns and the Imperative

Before we examine the other pronouns you need to know, let's look at the weird and wonderful things that happen when you use **object pronouns** and **reflexive pronouns** in the **imperative**. Remember, the imperative is the verb tense you use to give advice or orders, e.g. *Écoute! / Écoutons! / Écoutez!*

If you need to use an **object pronoun with the imperative**, e.g. *give them = donne-leur*, the pronouns you need for this are *moi* (= *me/to me*, e.g. *téléphone-moi*); *toi* (= *you/to you*) and the rest of the ordinary direct or indirect object pronouns, e.g. *mange-les = eat them*; *écris-lui = write to him/her*.

Note the use of the hyphen between the verb and the pronoun, i.e. *donne-leur*.

However, if your sentence is in the **negative**, *moi* and *toi* become *me* and *te*, and the pronoun goes *before* the verb, e.g. *ne me ments pas = don't lie to me*; *ne les mange pas = don't eat them*. The hyphen has also disappeared.

If you use a **reflexive verb in the imperative**, the reflexive pronouns are *toi*; *vous*; *nous* and are placed *after* the verb, e.g. *lève-toi, réveillez-vous, dépêchons-nous*.

In the **negative**, *toi* becomes *te*; *vous* and *nous* stay the same but all three reflexive pronouns go *before* the verb, e.g. *ne te lève pas = don't get up*; *ne vous fâchez pas = don't be angry/annoyed*.

EXERCICES

1. Replace the highlighted noun with an **object pronoun** and rewrite the sentence.

- (a) Écoute **la prof.** _____
(b) Donnez **ce livre** à Jonathan. _____
(c) Donnez ce livre à **Jonathan.** _____
(d) Ne regardons pas **les photos.** _____

2. Translate into French:

- (a) Don't phone him! _____
(b) Get up right now! _____
(c) Let's buy it! (*it* being *une Ferrari*) _____
(d) You two (= *vous deux*), hurry up! _____

Object pronouns and the past tenses

Pronouns also interfere with the **avoir** verbs in the past tenses, i.e. verbs that need the auxiliary **avoir** in the **passé composé** and in the **pluperfect**.

With **être** verbs, you have to make the past participle agree with the subject, e.g. **il est sorti/elle est sortie; il était tombé/elle était tombée**.

This rule does not apply to verbs whose auxiliary is **avoir**, e.g. **il a pris/elle a pris** → no change in **pris**.

But! Once an object pronoun appears, things change! The past participle must now agree but it must agree with the **object pronoun**, not the subject. Look at this example:

Il a pris le train - il a pris la voiture

We want to replace the highlighted words with an object pronoun. **Le train** is replaced by **le** (=it) which becomes **l'** because of the vowel starting the next word. **La voiture** is replaced by **la** which also becomes **l'**. But see what happens to the previously unchanged past participle:

Il a pris le train → **il l'a pris** - **il a pris la voiture** → **il l'a prise**.

EXERCICES

Replace the highlighted words with the correct pronoun. Then, rewrite the sentence, placing the pronoun correctly and making the past participle agree if necessary.

1. Elle a vendu **sa maison**. _____
2. On a mangé **le gâteau**. _____
3. Ils ont fini **leurs examens**. _____
4. Tu as vu **Guy et Léa** aujourd'hui? _____

Other pronouns

Y / En

The first two extra pronouns we are going to see are the words **y** and **en**. You already know one expression containing **y**: **il y a = there is**. **Y** and **en** are mostly used to refer to things and ideas, not to people.

They are usually placed between the subject and the verb, e.g. **j'y suis allé hier = I went there yesterday/j'en suis revenu hier = I came back from there yesterday**.

Here is a quick guide to help you know how to use these two pronouns. You will notice that **y** is closely associated with the preposition **à**, and **en** is associated with **de**.

Y Replaces a *place* preceded by a preposition such as **à, sur, dans** etc.

Example: **je vais à Toulouse** → **j'y vais***/il est **dans** sa chambre → **il y est**

Replaces an *idea* or *thing* preceded by **à**

Example: **je réponds à son texto** → **j'y réponds**

*When you use the verb **aller** in the future, there is a clash of vowels between **y** and the letter **i** starting the verb (e.g. **j'irai**). This sounds unpleasant so if, for example, you want to say **I will go there**, you shouldn't say **j'y + irai** but **j'irai là-bas**.

EN Replaces a *place* preceded by **de** (=from)

Example: nous venons **de Lyon** → nous **en** venons / elle arrive **de la gare** → elle **en** arrive

Replaces an *idea* or *thing* preceded by **de**

Example: ils sont contents **de leur résultats** → ils **en** sont contents

Replaces a *thing* preceded by a **partitive article** such as **du/de la** etc or a *thing* or *person* preceded by an expression of quantity or a number

Example: j'achète **du thé** → j'**en** achète/elle a **deux sœurs** → elle **en** a deux.*

*In this example, note the structure in *elle en a deux*. The word **sœurs** has been replaced by **en**, but the number has not been replaced. You keep the number in English as well: *she has two sisters* → *she has two of them*. Notice how the number/quantity is placed after the verb in French (without the **de** that may have been present in the original expression, e.g. *elle a beaucoup de sœurs* → *elle en a beaucoup*.)

Note: When using the verbs **penser à** and **parler de**, the structure will change depending on whether you're thinking about/talking about a **thing/idea** or a **person**. Compare these examples:

Je **pense à mes vacances**, j'**y** pense tout le temps = I'm thinking about my holidays, I think about them all the time. Here you use **y** to replace **à mes vacances**.

Je **parle de mes vacances**, j'**en** parle tout le temps = I'm talking about my holidays, I talk about them all the time. Here you use **en** to replace **de mes vacances**.

But:

Je **pense à mon ami(e)**, je **pense à lui/ à elle** tout le temps = I'm thinking about my friend, I think about him/her all the time. Here you use **à** plus the correct **stressed/disjunctive pronoun**.

Je **parle de mon ami(e)**, je **parle de lui/ d'elle** tout le temps = I'm talking about my friend, I talk about him/her all the time. Here you use **de** plus the correct **stressed/disjunctive pronoun**.

Other verbs where this rule applies: **s'intéresser à** = to be interested in; **s'occuper de** = to take care of; **se méfier de** = to be wary of.

EXERCICES

Replace the highlighted words with the correct pronoun/expression from this section.

- Nous sommes allés **chez ma tante**. _____
- Je fais **du hockey** depuis six ans. _____
- Il s'intéresse beaucoup **à Isabelle**. _____
- J'invite **quarante personnes**. _____
- Ils vont **à Paris** en juin mais Patrick ira **à Paris** en septembre.

Before we take a look at other types of pronouns, you need to know where the pronouns you saw so far go in a sentence, especially when there is more than one pronoun in the sentence. Here is a handy grid:

Position of pronouns

You read the grid from left to right.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
je / j' tu il/elle/on/ça nous vous ils/elles	ne/n'	me/m' te/t' se/s' nous vous se/s'	le/l' la/l' les	lui leur	y	en	verb/ auxiliary	pas (or plus/ jamais etc)	past participle

Examples:

Elle m'y conduit (= she drives me there) → elle(1) m'(3) y(6) conduit(8)

Je ne lui en ai pas parlé (= I didn't talk to him/her about it) → je(1) ne(2) lui(5) en(7) ai(8) pas(9) parlé(10)

Note: When your verbal group contains an infinitive, e.g. **je vais jouer**, the pronouns that were numbered 3 to 7 in our grid shift to the right with the infinitive at the end of the sentence:

1 is still *je, tu, il* etc, 2 is still *ne/n'* but now we have the verb/auxiliary in 3, number 4 is *pas* or the other negatives, and 5 is the past participle. We then have the original pronouns in columns 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 as numbers 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Number 11 is the infinitive.

Examples: Elle va m'y conduire (= she is going to drive me there)

Je n'ai pas pu lui en parler (= I was not able to talk to him/her about it)

EXERCICES

Replace the highlighted words with the appropriate pronoun. Then, rewrite the sentence, putting the pronouns in the correct place.

- Je n'ai pas vu **Béatrice/au café**.
- Il ne faut pas donner **de lait/à mon chat**; il ne tolère pas le lait.
- Elle donne **son ticket/au chauffeur de bus**.
- Elle donne **deux tickets/au chauffeur de bus**.
- Elle donne **ses deux tickets/au chauffeur de bus**.

As mentioned already, there are other types of pronouns, such as **possessive pronouns**, **interrogative pronouns** and **demonstrative pronouns**.

Possessive pronouns

These are the words you use when you want to say **mine** and **yours**. They need to agree with the noun they replace, even though that noun does not appear.

	Replacing a masculine singular noun:	Replacing a feminine singular noun:	Replacing a masculine plural noun:	Replacing a feminine plural noun:
MINE	le mien	la mienne	les miens	les miennes
YOURS, casual	le tien	la tienne	les tiens	les tiennes
HIS / HERS	le sien	la sienne	les siens	les siennes
OURS	le nôtre	la nôtre	les nôtres	les nôtres
YOURS, polite or group	le vôtre	la vôtre	les vôtres	les vôtres
THEIRS	le leur	la leur	les leurs	les leurs

Example: *J'ai trouvé un sac.* – Oh merci, c'est **le mien!**

Another example is what some French people say when they are toasting each other's health with a drink. **Health** is **santé**, a feminine noun. People can say **À ta santé!** or if more formal, **À votre santé!** But they can also say **À la tienne!** or **À la vôtre!** which implies the word **santé**.

Note that if you want to say **it is mine, yours** etc, possessive pronouns can be replaced by **c'est à + stressed pronoun**, e.g. **c'est le mien/la mienne** → **c'est à moi**; **c'est le leur/la leur** → **c'est à eux**. As you can see, the beauty of this structure is that it does not reflect what's being 'owned'. It reflects only the 'owner', making it easier to use.

You also use this structure to express **it's my turn** etc and **it's up to me** etc, e.g. **C'est à moi de jouer** = **it's my turn to play**; **c'est à elle de s'excuser** = **it's up to her to apologise**.

EXERCICES

Translate the following sentences into French:

- (a) My car is black but his is blue.
- (b) (*addressing a friend*) These pens, are they mine or yours?
- (c) (*addressing Monsieur Calvé*) These pens, are they mine or yours?
- (d) Your house is big but ours is small.

Interrogative pronouns

You all know **question words** like **qui** (= **who**) and **qu'est-ce que** (= **what**) in questions such as **qui habite là?** (= **who lives there?**) and **qu'est ce que tu fais?** (= **what are you doing?**). What you might not have known is that you were using **interrogative pronouns**.

Here are a few extra details about these types of words.

Qui can be used **with a preposition**, e.g. **Avec qui est-ce que tu vas en ville?** = **With whom are you going to town?/Who are you going to town with?**

In the expression **qu'est ce que**, the first word is **que**, and that is the actual pronoun **what** (remember that **qu'est-ce que** translates as **what is it that**). In formal style, you can use the word **que** as the only question word for **what** but in that case, the verb-subject structure is inverted. Compare: **Qu'est-ce que tu fais?/Que fais-tu?**

Note: When **what** is the subject, you need to say **qu'est ce qui**; e.g. **qu'est-ce qui est arrivé?** = **what happened?**

When **que** is used with a preposition, it changes to **quoi**; e.g. **à quoi tu penses?** = **what are you thinking about?**

Quel(s)/quelle(s) (= **which**) are not interrogative pronouns because even though they can be used to ask questions, they do not replace nouns. However, they are used to phrase the interrogative pronoun **which one(s)**.

Here is how to say **which one(s)** in French:

Masculine singular: **lequel** (i.e. **le** + **quel**, both in the masculine singular)

Feminine singular: **laquelle**

Masculine plural: **lesquels**

Feminine plural: **lesquelles**

Example: **J'ai aimé un de ses livres** (I liked one of his books) – **Ah oui? Lequel?** (Oh yes? Which one?)

(**Un livre** is masculine singular).

EXERCICES

Fill in the gaps with the correct interrogative pronoun:

- J'ai vu une de ses sœurs. – Ah oui? _____?
- J'ai pris deux de tes stylos. – Ah bon? _____?
- Avec _____ est-ce que tu as payé, avec ta carte bancaire ou par chèque?
- Voici mes T-shirts, _____ tu préfères, le blanc ou le rose?
- _____ lisez-vous?
- Il est pour _____, ce bouquet de fleurs?

Demonstrative pronouns

These are words such as: **the one** or **this one**, **these ones**.

	Used for the one(s) followed by qui (who) or que (which/that)	Used for this/that one and these/those ones *
Masculine singular	celui	celui-ci / celui-là
Feminine singular	celle	celle-ci / celle-là
Masculine plural	ceux	ceux-ci / ceux-là
Feminine plural	celles	celles-ci / celles-là

*You may remember **ci** and **là** from when we discussed **demonstrative adjectives**. They help with the distinction between **this/these** and **that/those**.

EXERCICES

Translate the following sentences into French:

- Here are some ice creams, take the one you want.
- These shoes are horrible but those ones are nice!
- Mushrooms? Do you want these ones or those ones?

Other relative pronouns

In Part 1, we studied the relative pronouns **qui** and **que**. Their role is to link up parts of sentences, e.g. **je parle du garçon qui a les cheveux roux et que j'ai rencontré le week-end dernier** = **I'm talking about the boy who has red hair and whom I met last weekend**.

There are other relative pronouns. Although some are identical to interrogative pronouns, their job here is to link up parts of sentences.

- **Où** is used to indicate place or time, e.g. **la ville où je suis né** = **the town where I was born**; **l'année où je suis né** = **the year (when) I was born**.
- **Dont** is used to express **of which/of whom, whose, from which/from whom**, when the original expression contains **de**, e.g. **l'auteur de ce livre est irlandais** = **the author of this book is Irish** → **voici un livre dont l'auteur est irlandais** = **here is a book whose author is Irish**.
- **Quoi** is used to express **with what, on what**, etc. It is preceded by a preposition and never refers to people or to specific things, e.g. **le sculpteur leur a montré avec quoi il travaille** = **the sculptor showed them with what he works/what he works with**.

- **Ce qui; ce que; ce dont** are used to express **what**, e.g. *je ne sais pas ce qui est arrivé* = I don't know **what** happened; *tu as entendu ce que Thomas a dit?* = did you hear **what** Thomas said?; *dites-moi ce dont vous avez besoin* = tell me **what** you need.

Note: **Ce dont** is only used when the original expression contained **de**, e.g. *parler de* = to talk of/about; *avoir besoin de* = to need, etc. Nowadays, **de quoi** is often used to replace the very formal **ce dont**; e.g. *je sais de quoi il parle* replaces *je sais ce dont il parle*.

- **Lequel/laquelle/lesquels/lesquelles** are used to express **of which/whom, about which/whom** and are used when referring to specific things and people. As you can see, they all contain a definite article, making things quite specific. They are used with a preposition, e.g. *les voisins avec lesquels je m'entends le mieux sont les Martin* = the neighbours **with whom** I get on best are the Martins.

You need to use this structure when you say **the reason why** = *la raison pour laquelle*.

Note: Be careful when the preposition is **à**. **À + lequel** will become **auquel** and **à + lesquels/lesquelles** will become **auxquels/auxquelles**, as was the case for **à + le** (→ **au**) and **à + les** (→ **aux**).

Example: *penser à* = to think about → *le gâteau auquel je pense est dans le frigo* = the cake I'm thinking about is in the fridge.

EXERCICES

Fill in the gaps with a relative pronoun covered in this section. Then, translate your sentence into English.

(a) L'homme _____ la maison a brûlé est portugais.

(b) Le village _____ j'habite est très petit.

(c) La lettre _____ je vais répondre arrivera lundi.

(d) Je ne sais pas _____ je vais mettre pour le baptême.

(e) Le jour _____ on est allés au parc, il faisait très beau.

(f) De _____ est-ce que vous parlez?