

Contemporary Grammar of English

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Lecture 9:

- Reciprocal Pronouns
- Possessive Pronouns





Reciprocal Pronouns



A reciprocal pronoun is a pronoun which is used to indicate that two or more people are carrying out or have carried out an action of some type, with both receiving the benefits or consequences of that action simultaneously. Any time something is done or given in return, reciprocal pronouns are used.

The compound pronouns **each other** and **one another**, which express the idea of a reciprocal relationship are called reciprocal pronouns. They are related to the reflexive pronouns in that they can be said to express a 'two-way reflexive relationship'. Yet there are important differences between reflexive and reciprocal pronouns. Compare:

Reflexive Pronoun

John blamed himself.

Mary blamed herself.

John and Mary blamed themselves.

Reciprocal Pronoun

John blamed Mary.

Mary blamed John.

John and Mary blamed each other.



Reciprocal Pronouns



There is no difference in the use of the two pronouns **each other** and **one another**. Although in prescriptive tradition, **each other** is sometimes preferred for reference to **two** and **one another** to **more than two**. There is, however, a stylistic difference between the two reciprocals in that **each other** is more common in informal style and **one another** in more formal contexts:

- *Judith and Frederick waved to each other.*
- *All the children trust one another.*

The reciprocal pronouns have the genitive forms **each other's and **one another's**:**

- *The scientists in this lab often use one another's equipment.*
- *My friend Olivia and I know very little about one another's work.*
- *We are all the victims of one another's taste.*
- *They borrowed each other's ideas.*
- *They are all determined to cut each other's throats.*
- *We didn't see each other's faces.*



Reciprocal Pronouns: Exercise



- Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first sentence. Use 'each other' or 'one another'.
1. The dog looked at the cat and the cat looked at the dog.
- The animals looked at each other.
 2. Romeo loved Juliet and Juliet loved Romeo.
- Romeo and Juliet loved each other.
 3. You didn't talk to Jack and he didn't talk to you.
- You didn't talk to each other.
 4. I gave him a present and he gave me a present.
- We gave each other presents.
 5. Last night I met my wife's parents and she met mine.
- My wife and I met each other's parents last night.
 6. My brother used to borrow my clothes and I used to borrow his.
- My brother and I used to borrow each other's clothes.



Reciprocal Pronouns: Exercise



Choose the sentence which means the same thing as the first sentence.

- 1. Once a week, I cook dinner for Rafael and he cooks dinner for me.**
 - a- we cook for each other. ✓
 - b- we cook for ourselves.
- 2. After the match, everyone in the team felt sad.**
 - a- They felt sorry for one another.
 - b- They felt sorry for themselves. ✓
- 3. Both my brothers have problems with their knees from playing rugby.**
 - a- They hurt one another playing rugby.
 - b- They hurt themselves playing rugby. ✓
- 4. On Christmas Day, I gave Mandy a book and she gave me the same book!**
 - a- we bought each other the same book. ✓
 - b- we bought ourselves the same book.
- 5. After the boy's accident, both his parents felt guilty.**
 - a- They blamed one another for the accident.
 - b- They blamed themselves for the accident. ✓
- 6. I teach Dora English and she teaches me Polish.**
 - a- we teach each other. ✓
 - b- we teach ourselves.



Possessive Pronouns



Determinative and independent possessives:

Possessive pronouns consist traditionally of two series: the first, 'weak' set of possessive pronouns has a determinative function, while the second, 'strong' set has an independent function as a noun phrase:

- Determinative (attributive): *my, our, your, his, her, its, their*
- Independent (nominal): *mine, ours, yours, his, hers, (its), theirs*

The determinative (attributive) pronouns are syntactically determiners, while the independent (nominal) pronouns are used like the genitive with ellipsis. Compare:

Determinative

Lucy's scarf

My daughter's scarf

Her scarf

Independent

The scarf is Lucy's

The scarf is my daughter's

The scarf is hers



Possessive Pronouns



English uses possessives with reference to parts of the body and personal belongings, as well as in several expressions:

- *John had his nose broken.*
- *I almost lost my balance.*
- *It's usual of them to change their minds.*

The definite article is usual in prepositional phrases related to the object, or, in passive constructions, the subject:

- *The mother took her child by the hand.*
- *He slapped her on the face.*
- *She was stabbed several times in the chest.*