

SKILL 44: DISTINGUISH POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES AND PRONOUNS

Possessive adjectives and pronouns both show who or what “owns” a noun. However, possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns do not have the same function, and these two kinds of possessives can be confused on the TOEFL test. A possessive adjective describes a noun: it must be accompanied by a noun. A possessive pronoun takes the place of a noun: it cannot be accompanied by a noun.

They lent me *their* book.
ADJECTIVE

They lent me *theirs*.
PRONOUN

Notice that in the first example the possessive adjective *their* is accompanied by the noun *book*. In the second example the possessive pronoun *theirs* is not accompanied by a noun.

These examples show the types of errors that are possible with possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns on the TOEFL test.

Each morning they read *theirs** newspapers.
Could you give me *your**?

In the first example, the possessive pronoun *theirs* is incorrect because it is accompanied by the noun *newspapers*, and a possessive pronoun cannot be accompanied by a noun. The possessive adjective *their* is needed in the first example. In the second example, the possessive adjective *your* is incorrect because it is not accompanied by a noun, and a possessive adjective must be accompanied by a noun. The possessive pronoun *yours* is needed in the second example.

The following chart outlines the possessives and their uses:

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES	POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS
<p><i>my</i> <i>your</i> <i>his</i> <i>her</i> <i>its</i> <i>our</i> <i>their</i></p>	<p><i>mine</i> <i>yours</i> <i>his</i> <i>hers</i> — <i>ours</i> <i>theirs</i></p>
<p><i>must be accompanied by a noun</i></p>	<p><i>cannot be accompanied by a noun</i></p>

EXERCISE 44: Each of the following sentences contains at least one possessive pronoun or adjective. Circle the possessives in these sentences. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. If she borrows (your) coat, then you should be able to borrow (her).
- C 2. Each pot and pan in (her) kitchen has (its) own place on the shelf.
- 3. Mary and Mark invited theirs parents to see their new apartment.

- _____ 4. When my roommate paid her half of the rent, I paid mine.
- _____ 5. All students need to bring theirs own pencils and answer sheets to the exam.
- _____ 6. All her secretaries are working late tonight to finish her report.
- _____ 7. The horse trotting around the track won its race a few minutes ago.
- _____ 8. Before the report is finalized, the information in their notes and our must be proofed.
- _____ 9. She worked all day cooking food and making decorations for her son's birthday party.
- _____ 10. The weather in the mountains this weekend will be extremely cold, so please take yours heavy jackets.

SKILL 45: CHECK PRONOUN REFERENCE FOR AGREEMENT

After you have checked that the subject and object pronouns and the possessives are used correctly, you should also check each of these pronouns and possessives for agreement. The following are examples of errors of this type that you might find on the TOEFL test:

The boys will cause trouble if you let *him**.
 Everyone must give *their** name.

In the first example, the singular pronoun *him* is incorrect because it refers to the plural noun *boys*. This pronoun should be replaced with the plural pronoun *them*. In the second example, the plural possessive adjective *their* is incorrect because it refers to the singular *everyone*. This adjective should be replaced with the singular *his* or *his or her*.

The following chart outlines what you should remember about checking pronoun reference:

PRONOUN AGREEMENT	
1.	Be sure that every pronoun and possessive agrees with the noun it refers to.
2.	You generally check <i>back</i> in the sentence for agreement.

EXERCISE 45: Each of the following sentences contains at least one pronoun or possessive. Circle the pronouns and possessives. Draw arrows to the nouns they refer to. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. If a person really wants to succeed, (they) must always work hard.
- C 2. If you see the students from the math class, could you return (their) exam papers to (them?)
- _____ 3. Some friends and I went to see a movie, and afterwards we wrote a critique about them.