

PRONOUNS: CONQUERING THE ECCENTRICITIES OF WHO/WHOM AND WHOEVER/WHOMEVER

Learn to recognize the **case** distinctions between **who/whoever** and **whom/whomever**.

Who/whoever are **subjective case** pronouns. They represent a noun or noun phrase used as the subject of a sentence. They operate in the same ways that the pronouns **they**, **we**, **I**, **she**, and **he** do: as subjects of verbs.

Who attended the ball game? "Who" is the subject of the verb "attended."
They attended the concert with friends **who** were able to come up with the tickets. "Who" is the subject of the verb "were able."

Whom/whomever are **objective case pronouns**. They represent a noun or noun phrase as the direct object of the verb. They operate in the same ways as **me**, **them**, **him**, and **her** do in a sentence.

The majority of the crowd was against **whomever** began the heckling. "Whomever" is the object of the preposition "against."

To use the forms correctly, you must determine the pronoun's use in its own clause--whether independent or dependent. You can make this determination by using the following method:

1. Isolate the pronoun's clause.
2. If the clause is inverted, put the parts in normal order (subject + verb + other elements).
3. Substitute pronouns to see what fits. If **he**, **she**, or **they** fit, use **who** or **whoever**. If **him**, **her**, or **them** fit, use **whom** or **whomever**.

A few sample sentences will illustrate the method.

- **Who/whom** do you contact?
- You did contact **who/whom**?
- You did contact **him**.
- *Correct:* **Whom** did you contact?

- These are the recruits (**who/whom**) we think will go to OCS.
- **Who/whom** will go to OCS?
- **They** will go to OCS.
- *Correct:* These are the recruits **who** we think will go to OCS.

- The newspaper always attacks (**whoever/whomever**) the governor appoints.
- The governor appoints **whoever/whomever**.
- The governor appoints **her**.
- *Correct:* The newspaper always attacks **whomever** the governor appoints.

EXERCISE I:

DIRECTIONS: Insert **who**, **whoever**, **whom**, **whomever** in each of the following sentences. (Remember to base your decision on the use of the pronoun in its own clause.)

1. The conference will be attended by those _____ teach psychology in senior colleges.
2. The position should be filled by someone _____ our clients will trust.
3. _____ is at the gate should inspect your pass.
4. He is the actor _____ they say the director slapped.

5. The delegation met with the Prime Minister, _____ they assumed was in a position to make decisions.
6. Do you know someone _____ we can ask?
7. You can get through a class reunion by saying "You look fantastic!" to _____ you don't remember.
8. My grandmother knew a man _____ groomed Teddy Roosevelt's horse.
9. _____ stole my car now owns a gas guzzler that breaks down every fifteen miles.
10. _____ did he say wrote that novel?

EXERCISE II:

Now that you've had some practice deciding which who in the who family to use in a particular sentence, it's time to create your own prose in which you use these pronouns correctly. Please write ten (10) sentences on the back of this handout to show what you've learned. **Have a tutor check your work just to be sure you've mastered the concept.**

Answers to EXERCISE I

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| 1. who | 6. whom |
| 2. whom | 7. whomever |
| 3. whoever | 8. who |
| 4. whom | 9. whoever |
| 5. who | 10. who |

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