

How to choose between “I” and “me” Correctly

When relating a story, do you wonder whether to say, "Hector and I went to the movies," or "Hector and me went... ." Here, you would say, "Hector and I went to the movies," but "Hector and I" is not always correct. "The race was won by Hector and I" is just as ungrammatical as "Hector and me won the race." It's easy to choose correctly if you remember a few simple steps.

Remember the difference in case between the pronouns

Both *I* and *me* are pronouns that we use to refer to ourselves, but *I* is nominative, suitable for use as the subject of a sentence or clause, and *me* is accusative, suitable for use as the object of a verb.

- **Nominative** – The nominative case is used when the pronoun is the subject (e.g. "I rode in the car") or, when speaking very formally, after a form of "to be" (e.g. "It is I," would be formal, "It's me" would be informal).
- **Accusative** – The accusative case is used when the pronoun is the object (e.g. "He drove me to work") or with prepositions (e.g. "between you and me," not "between you and I").

Think like a native

Most native speakers rarely make case errors with these pronouns, except when they are paired with other nouns as part of a compound subject or object. (Unfortunately, problems with pronoun case are more common today than twenty years ago.) Although almost no one would say, "Harry took I in his car," one often hears sentences such as "Harry took Jordan and I in his car." If you're trying to determine which pronoun to use in a sentence with a compound subject, try the sentence using only the pronoun part of the subject. Whichever pronoun, *I* or *me*, sounds right alone is the one to use in the compound subject.

Reversing

If you change the subject around to a different spot in the sentence, and make it about you and only you, you can easily spot the places where the wrong usage of "I" and "me" takes place

- Examples:
 - Harry and me went to the store. (Change it around so that Harry's out of the picture and it's just about you - you would never say, "Me went to the store.")
 - "Who's at the door?" You answer, "It's me." (No, no, no! You would really properly say, "It is I." Consider a related sentence: "That writer is me." Try reversing the word order, and you end up with "Me am that writer." You use nominative pronouns such as "I" after forms of "to be" (i.e. *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, and *been*). The "to be" functions as an equal sign, so the nouns and pronouns on both sides of the "equal sign" are nominative.
 - The cake was made by Justin and I. (Would you ever say, "The cake was made by I"?)



Use pronouns correctly in comparisons to prevent ambiguity

Write out the full comparison to decide which pronoun to use.

- She likes Winifred more than I do. (This can be shortened to "She likes Winifred more than I," but the former may sound more natural.)
- She likes Winifred more than she likes me. (This can be shortened to "She likes Winifred more than me.")

Tips

- Here's a good tip; just remember 'me' never did anything.
- Place *I* and *me* after the other nouns or pronouns.
 - "Elliot, Amanda, and I are friends" (not "I, Elliot, and Amanda are friends")
 - "The teacher saw him and me" (not "The teacher saw me and him")
- In informal situations, consider using "yours truly" if you are unsure or the proper form sounds stuffy. It can replace *I*, *me*, or *myself*.
 - "He's better at it than yours truly."
 - "Amanda and yours truly did that."
 - "It's yours truly, ma; I got a little message for ya" (from Nelly's "My Place")
 - "I can take care of yours truly" (from Merriam-Webster)
- Remember to figure out proper usage before you begin to speak; consider saying the sentence desired silently to yourself to determine if you are using the proper word.
- Now try it yourself.
 - Is this correct?: "You and me are going to the movies later."
Answer: No. The correct subject would be "You and I." (Take the other pronoun out of the sentence and say it again: "I [not *me*] am going to the movies later.")
 - Is this correct?: "My mom is taking Javier and I to the mall."
Answer: No. The correct object of the verb "taking" is "Javier and me." (Take Javier out of the equation and try it again: "My mom is taking me [not *I*] to the mall.")
 - Is this correct?: "She is better at art than me"
Answer: No. The correct pronoun would be "I." (Write the comparison out in full: "She is better at art than I am [not *me*].")
- Practice in your head before you say it until it becomes automatic.

Warnings

- Be careful with your pronouns when you switch voices. Remember that "by" is a preposition and requires the accusative case in sentences such as "The story was written by me." This sentence would use the nominative case if written in the active voice: "I wrote the story."
- Do not use "myself" in place of "I" or "me." "Myself" can be either a reflexive pronoun or intensive pronoun.
 - David and myself were present. (The pronoun should be in the nominative case: "David and I were present.")
 - The event was catered by Elizabeth and myself. (The pronoun should be in the genitive case: "The event was catered by Elizabeth and me.")



- I cut myself. (The sentence is correct because the pronoun is reflexive; the subject did something to itself.)
- I saw it myself. (The sentence is correct because the pronoun is intensive; it adds emphasis.)

