WRITING: USE OF PRONOUNS

Pronouns change form with function. The case (subjective, objective, possessive) shows how pronouns are being used in a clause or phrase:

Subjective:  Objective:  Possessive:
I             me          mine
she           her         hers
he            him         his
you           you         yours
it            it           its
we            us           ours
they          them         theirs
who           whom         whose
whoever       whomever     whosever

To use the proper case:
1. If pronoun (subjective/objective) is part of a compound subject or object, drop other noun or pronoun and use the pronoun in question by itself:

   Joe and _______(I/me) went to a movie last Saturday.
          (Me) went to a movie? Incorrect
          (I) went to a movie? Correct

   Joe and I went to a movie last Saturday.

2. If the pronoun is used as an appositive, drop the noun for a moment:

   _______(We/us) students work very hard.
          (Us) work very hard? Incorrect
          (We) work very hard? Correct

   We students work very hard.

3. If using a pronoun in comparisons, finish the unstated comparison in your mind:

   He is stronger than ______(I/me.)
          He is stronger than me am strong? Incorrect
          He is stronger than I am strong? Correct

   He is stronger than I.

4. Demonstrative pronouns (this/ that/ these/ those) are used to show specific objects, or are used as noun replacements.

   (used to indicate specific objects)  This chair is my favorite.
          I told those people.

   (used as noun replacements)         This (or that) is my favorite.
          I told them.  

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5. To avoid confusion between its and it's, substitute the possessive pronoun "his" or the words "it is":

**The puppy opened (its/it's) eyes.**
- The puppy opened (it is) eyes **Incorrect**
- The puppy opened (his) eyes **Correct**

**The puppy opened its eyes.**

Note: "It" is singular and is used generally to attribute a quality to a non-gendered noun (puppy). There is no plural possessive form "its'." Use the neuter plural form(s) "their(s)."

6. **Apostrophes**, used most often with proper names, also **signal possession**. The following possessive pronouns, which take the place of proper nouns, do not need apostrophes:

   - ours, yours, its, theirs

Apostrophes may signal also a contraction of words (where letters have been left out):

   - It's (it is) our hope that you will feel better.

7. **Reflexive pronouns** are used to emphasize effort without help from any external agency. These pronouns need to be memorized, as there is no consistent rule that can be applied.

   - I **Myself**
   - He **Himself**
   - She **Herself**
   - You **Yourself**
   - It **Itself**
   - We **Ourselves**
   - They **Themselves**
   - You **Yourselves**
   - NOT THEIRSELVES

8. **Relative pronouns** (who/ that/which) signal dependent, adjectival clauses and either follow independent clauses or are imbedded within the sentence.

   "Who" refers to people, animals, or objects having a distinct personality. When using a proper name, the "who" clause is set off by commas because it adds information, but is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

   "That" almost always restricts its reference to specific animals or things and anonymous or collective groups of people. If the "that" clause is necessary to the meaning of the sentence, do not set it off with commas.

   "Which" refers to selected animals and things that are part of a larger group. Dependent clauses that use "which" are usually non-restrictive (not absolutely necessary for the meaning of the sentence) and are usually set off with commas.

   **non-restrictive**
   - Mary, **who** has traveled to France, thinks the people are friendly.
   **BUT:**
   - The man **who** called didn't leave his name.

   **restrictive**
   - The city **that** is noted for its harbor is Sidney.
   **BUT:**
   - **non-restrictive**
   - Sidney, **which** is noted for its harbor, is a city.