Who or Whom?

How do you choose between the various forms of the pronoun who? (who, whose, whom, whoever, whomever)

The number (singular or plural) of the pronoun (and its verbs) is determined by what the pronoun refers to. It can refer to a singular person or a group of people.

Example: The person who wrote the book will be ready to autograph it.
Example: The people who have bought the book should receive the first autographs.

The forms of he and they are similar to the forms of who. Look at the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
<td>he</td>
<td>his</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who</td>
<td>whose</td>
<td>whom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plural</strong></td>
<td>they</td>
<td>their</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who</td>
<td>whose</td>
<td>whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To choose correctly among the forms of who, re-phrase the sentence so you choose between he and him.

Example: If you want him, write whom; if you want he, write who.

Who do you think is responsible? (Do you think he is responsible?)
Whom shall we ask to the party? (Shall we ask him to the party?)
Give the book to whomever you please. (Give the book to him.)
Give the book to whoever seems to want it most. ("He seems to want it most.")
Whoever shows up first will win the prize. (He shows up first.)

The problem most writers have with whose is confusing it with who’s which is really a contraction for who is or who has. In the same way that we should not confuse his with he’s (the contraction for he is or he has), we should not confuse whose with who’s.

Example: Who’s that standing on the corner?
Whose book is this?
I don’t care whose book this is. It’s brilliant!

Whose can be used to refer to inanimate objects as well as to people.

Example: I remember reading a book whose title I can’t recall right now.

Original material copyright © Dallas Baptist University. All rights reserved. Other copyrighted material included by permission or authorization. Created by UWC Staff for Dallas Baptist University. http://www.dbu.edu/uwc