

Chapter 8

Object pronouns, reflexives and indefinite pronouns

8.1 Object pronouns used for the object of a verb

	Singular				Plural	
1st pers.	mij	me	me		ons	us
2nd pers.	jou	je	you (informal)		jullie	je you (informal)
	u		you (formal)			
3rd pers.	hem	'm	die him		hen/hun	ze them
	haar	d'r/r'	her		die	
	het	't	dat it			

Geef mij het boek.

Give me the book.

Ik zie jullie helemaal niet.

I don't see you at all.

Heb je 'm gehoord?

Have you heard him?

Wij hebben d'r samen met Jan ontmoet.

We've met her together with Jan.

Here, too, we have both stressed and unstressed forms of the pronouns.

- **mij**: this is usually the written form
- **jou** ordinarily stresses familiarity or used for special emphasis

Note: The verbal ending **-t** is not dropped when the **je** following the verb is the object:

Hij ziet je elke dag om negen uur.

He sees you every day at nine o'clock.

Jij wast je 's ochtends met koud water.

You wash (yourself) in the morning with cold water.

8.1.1 *Some details about pronoun usage*

The unstressed form *je* can replace *jullie* but only when the latter has already occurred in the sentence:

Jullie gaan naar de stad, maar je koopt niets.

You go into town, but you don't buy anything.

- *haar* (singular) is usually used only when the pronoun is stressed or as a written form. In Belgium, the unstressed form *d'r* is not used; often *ze* (referring to a person) is heard instead. However, this is not considered standard language.
- *het* is never used after prepositions: for example *over het* = *erover*, *op het* = *erop*, *uit het* = *eruit*. See Chapter 21 for more on this topic.
- *hem* is used for inanimate objects in the written language to refer to *de* words that indicate, for example, institutions, public bodies and so on. Normally, demonstratives are used instead. *hij*, however, is the only full form that may be used at all times to refer to anything other than people.

Waar is mijn auto?

Where is my car?

O, hij staat in de garage.

Oh, it is in the garage.

Waar is mijn auto?

Where is my car?

O, die staat in de garage.

Oh, it is in the garage.

8.1.2 *hun and hen*

Hen/hun as stressed forms can only refer to people; *die* refers to anything other than people:

Zij gaan met hem naar een restaurant.

They go to the restaurant with him.

Hen haalt hij op om zeven uur.

He picks them up at seven o'clock.

Hij neemt onze slaapzakken mee op reis.

He's taking our sleeping bags with him on his trip.

Die haalt hij morgenochtend op.

He is picking them up tomorrow morning.

There is an official rule as to when to use **hen** or **hun**: **hen** is used as a direct object and after prepositions, whereas **hun** is an indirect object. However, **hen** is used less and less, especially in spoken Dutch, because even native speakers of Dutch don't always know when to use which form:

Ik geef hun het geld. I give them the money.

Ik geef het geld aan hen.

Hij ziet hen. He sees them.

Wij zien hen later. We will meet them later.

Jullie doen het voor hen. You do it for them.

- In more familiar speech, the unstressed **ze** can be substituted in all cases; this is the only choice when the pronoun refers to things:

– **Daar staan Piet en Gerrit.** There are Piet and Gerrit.

+ **Ik zie ze niet.** I don't see them.

– **Geef ze het geld.** Give them the money.

+ **Okee, ik geef hun het geld.** Okay, I will give them the money.

+ **Nu zie ik hen.** Now I see them.

– **Heb je de enveloppen met geld?** Do you have the envelopes with money?

+ **Ja, ik heb ze bij me.** Yes, I have them with me.

8.2 Subject or object pronoun *die*

- A subject or object pronoun in the third person when stressed often turns up as **die**:

Hij weet het wel. He knows it all right.

Die weet het wel. *He* knows it all right.

Ik ken haar (d'r/ze) niet. I don't know her.

Die ken ik niet. I don't know *her*.

- *die* is used to refer to inanimate objects instead of *haar* and *hem*:

Hij verkoopt de auto. He sells the car. He sells it.

Hij verkoopt die.

De auto? Die is verkocht. The car? *It* has been sold.

A sentence
with two
objects:
direct and
indirect

8.3 A sentence with two objects: direct and indirect

When a sentence contains two objects, the direct (usually a thing) and the indirect (usually a person) occur in various sequences depending on whether they are pronouns or nouns. In the examples that follow, the direct object is underlined and the indirect object is in italics. You can observe in the examples how the objects can be replaced by pronouns:

De man geeft het geld aan de vrouw.

The man gives the money to the woman.

De man geeft de vrouw het geld.

The man gives the woman the money.

Hij geeft het geld aan de vrouw.

He gives the money to the woman.

Hij geeft de vrouw het geld.

He gives the woman the money.

Hij geeft het aan de vrouw.

He gives it to the woman.

Hij geeft het geld aan haar.

He gives the money to her.

Hij geeft haar het geld.

He gives her the money.

Hij geeft het aan haar. (*haar* gets the stress)

He gives it to her.

Hij geeft het haar. (*geeft* gets the stress)

He gives it to her.

8.3.1 Let's try it

Take the **aan** out of the following sentences and adjust word order as necessary.

- 1 Vertel je verhaal aan je broer.
- 2 Schrijf een brief aan de ouders van je vrouw.
- 3 Hoeveel keer heb je dat aan je leraar verteld?
- 4 Geef een geschenk aan je verloofde voor Kerstmis.
- 5 De politieagent geeft een bekeuring aan de fietser.
- 6 Sinterklaas geeft cadeautjes aan de kinderen van de basisschool.
- 7 De vader leest elke avond een verhaaltje voor aan zijn kinderen.
- 8 Hij geeft een nieuwe auto aan zichzelf.

8.4 Reflexive pronouns

When the object of a verb is the same person as the subject and when the subject acts on itself, the object is then called reflexive. There are two kinds of reflexive verb in Dutch: those that are (1) grammatically reflexive and (2) exclusively reflexive.

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Hij wast zich. | He washes himself. |
| | Hij wast zijn auto. | He washes his car. |
| 2 | Hij vergist zich. | He makes an error. |
| | | (uncommon in English, but like verbs
such as he betakes himself, she
bethinks herself) |

The table shows the reflexive forms for all persons.

	Singular			Plural		
1st pers.	me	ik was me	myself	ons	wij wassen ons	ourselves
2nd pers.	je	jij wast je	yourself	je	jullie wassen je	yourselves
		u wast zich	yourself			
3rd pers.	zich	hij wast zich	himself/	zich	zij wassen zich	themselves
		zij wast zich	herself/			
		het wast zich	itself			