



NDA/NA ENGLISH MASTERY SERIES

MODULE 02

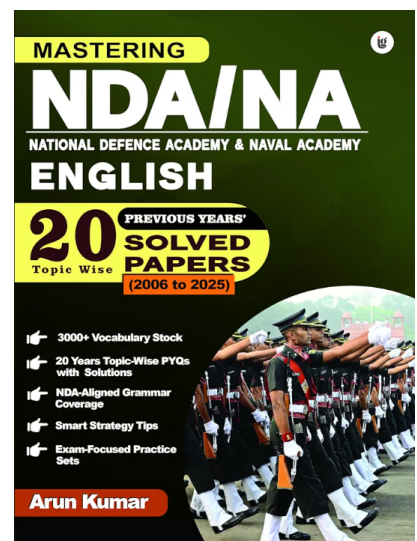
Pronoun

Pronoun types, agreement, usage rules, common errors and practice.

From the book

MASTERING NDA/NA ENGLISH

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➤ Introduction

A Pronoun is a word used in place of a noun to avoid repetition and simplify sentences. Without pronouns, language would be redundant and awkward.

For example: *Ravi is a student. **He** studies hard.* (He replaces Ravi.)

Definition of a Pronoun

A Pronoun is a word that replaces a noun or a noun phrase in a sentence. Pronouns must agree with the noun they replace in gender, number, and person.

➤ Types of Pronouns

Pronouns are classified into the following types:

1. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are words used in place of specific nouns to refer to particular persons, animals, or things without naming them directly. They show person (first, second, third), number (singular/plural), gender (he, she, it), and case (subjective, objective, possessive).

Forms of Personal Pronouns

PERSON	SUBJECTIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN
1st Person Singular	I	me	my	mine
1st Person Plural	We	us	our	ours
2nd Person	You	you	your	yours
3rd Person Singular (Male)	He	him	his	his
3rd Person Singular (Female)	She	her	her	hers
3rd Person Singular (Thing)	It	it	its	—
3rd Person Plural	They	them	their	Theirs

Examples:

- I am going to the market. , She gave the book to **him.**, This is **my** bag. That one is **mine.**

2. Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are pronouns that end in **-self** (singular) or **-selves** (plural) and are used when the subject and the object of the verb are the **same person or thing**. They “reflect” the action of the verb back to the subject.

Forms:

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves

Examples:

- I hurt **myself**.
- She introduced **herself**.
- We enjoyed **ourselves** at the party.

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- ✓ Use reflexive pronouns only when the subject and object are the same.
- ✗ Incorrect: He told **myself** to wait.
- ✓ Correct: He told **me** to wait.

The following is the table of verbs which require reflexive pronouns.

Verb + Reflexive Pronoun	Example Sentence
enjoy oneself	We enjoyed ourselves at the wedding.
behave oneself	Please behave yourself during the meeting.
help oneself (to)	Help yourself to some fruits.
prepare oneself	She prepared herself for the long journey.
pride oneself (on)	He prides himself on his honesty.
hurt oneself	She hurt herself while running.
cut oneself	I cut myself while peeling potatoes.
burn oneself	He burned himself with hot tea.
introduce oneself	She introduced herself to the new neighbors.
avail oneself (of)	He availed himself of the training program.
apply oneself (to)	You should apply yourself to your studies.
content oneself (with)	She contented herself with a small portion.
absent oneself (from)	He absented himself from the conference.
express oneself	She expressed herself through art.

3. Emphatic Pronouns

Emphatic pronouns, also called **intensive pronouns**, are pronouns that have the **same form** as reflexive pronouns (**-self / -selves**) but are used **only for emphasis**, not as objects of a verb. They highlight or stress the noun or pronoun they refer to.

Examples:

- I myself saw the accident.
 - The Prime Minister himself addressed the crowd.
- If the pronoun is removed, the core sentence remains correct.

4. Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns are pronouns used to point out or indicate specific persons, animals, places, ideas, or things. They show whether the noun being referred to is singular or plural and whether it is near or far in relation to the speaker. Forms: this, that, these, those

Examples:

- **This** is my pen.
- **Those** are your books.
 - **This/These** refer to things **near**,
 - **That/Those** refer to things **far**.

5. Indefinite Pronouns

Refer to **unspecified persons or things**.

Common Examples:

someone, anyone, everyone, no one, none, anything, everything, something, each, either, neither, one, many, few, several

Examples:

- Someone knocked at the door.
 - None of them was present.
 - Each of the players was awarded.
- Each, either, neither, someone, everyone are singular and take a singular verb.

6. Interrogative Pronouns

Used to ask questions.

Forms: who, whom, whose, which, what

PRONOUN	USE	EXAMPLE
Who	Subject	Who is knocking at the door?
Whom	Object	Whom did you meet yesterday?

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Whose	Possession	Whose book is this?
Which	Choice among limited options	Which is your pen?
What	General question	What is your name?

7. Relative Pronouns

Used to connect a clause or phrase to a noun or pronoun.

Common Relative Pronouns: who, whom, whose, which, that

Examples:

- The boy who won the prize is my friend.
- The book which you gave me is interesting.
- The man whose car was stolen is upset.

Relative pronouns follow the noun they refer to and introduce a relative clause.

8. Distributive Pronouns

Distributive pronouns are pronouns used to refer to persons or things one at a time, considering them individually rather than collectively. They emphasize the separate and individual members of a group.

Examples: each, either, neither

- Each of the students was praised.
- Either of the two roads leads to the station.
- Neither of the accusations is true.

Always singular and take singular verbs.

9. Reciprocal Pronouns:

Reciprocal pronouns are pronouns used to express a mutual or two-way relationship between two or more people or things, showing that each does something to the other. They indicate the action is shared or exchanged. Forms: each other, one another

- They love each other.
- The teammates supported one another.

Each other is used for two persons/things;
One another is used for more than two.

Important Rules & Tips for Exams

Rule 1: Agreement of Pronoun with Antecedent

The pronoun must agree with its antecedent (the noun it replaces) in number, gender, and person.

- Every student must bring his/her pen. ✓
- Neither of the boys has done his homework. ✓

Rule 2: Use of Reflexive Pronouns

Don't use reflexive pronouns unless the subject and object are the same.

He enjoyed with himself. ✗

He enjoyed himself. ✓

Rule 3: Avoid Ambiguity in Pronoun Reference

Ambiguous: Ravi told Ramesh that he was late.
(Who is "he"?)

Clear: Ravi told Ramesh, "You are late."

Rule 4: Correct Use of "Each, Either, Neither"

These are singular pronouns. Always use singular verbs and singular possessive adjectives with them.

- Each of them has his own book.
- Neither of the accusations is true.

Rule 5: Use of "One"

When "**one**" is used, continue with "one's," not "his/her."

One must do **his** duty. ✗

One must do **one's** duty. ✓

Rule 6: Who vs Whom

- Use who as the subject of a verb.
- Use whom as the object.

Examples:

- Who is knocking at the door? (Subject)
- Whom did you meet? (Object)

Tip: If you can replace the word with he/she, use "who."

If you can replace it with him/her, use "whom."

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Rule 7: Use of "It"

- For lifeless objects, animals (when gender is not specified), and weather.

Examples:

- It is raining.
- It was a cold night.
- It is a dog. (If gender is not known)

Common Errors in Competitive Exams

INCORRECT SENTENCE	CORRECT SENTENCE	EXPLANATION
Everyone must do their duty.	Everyone must do his or her duty.	Indefinite pronouns like "everyone" are singular.
Neither of the girls have done their homework.	Neither of the girls has done her homework.	"Neither" is singular.
One should respect his elders.	One should respect one's elders.	Maintain consistency.
Myself did the work.	I did the work.	Reflexive pronoun cannot be subject.
He is a man which I admire.	He is a man whom I admire.	Use "whom" for object of verb.

Summary Chart of Pronoun Types

TYPE	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
Personal	Refers to specific people or things	I, you, he, they
Reflexive	Subject and object are the same	myself, yourself
Emphatic	Emphasizes the subject	He himself did it
Demonstrative	Points to things	this, that, these
Indefinite	Refers to unspecified things	someone, each
Interrogative	Used in questions	who, what
Relative	Connects clauses	who, which, that
Distributive	Refers to one at a time	each, either
Reciprocal	Shows mutual action	each other, one another

Pronoun Rules

1. Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Rule: A pronoun must match its antecedent (the noun it refers to) in number (singular or plural), gender (male, female, or neutral), and person (first, second, or third).

Example: Each student did his/her work. (The singular pronoun "his/her" matches the singular antecedent "each student.")

2. Collective Nouns

Rule: Collective nouns (e.g., team, committee, family) are generally treated as singular and take singular pronouns when referring to the group as a unit. However, when emphasizing individual members, use plural pronouns.

Example: The committee has submitted **its** final report. The committee were divided in **their** opinions. The jury has announced **its** verdict. The jury were arguing among **themselves** about the case.

3. Singular Indefinite Pronouns

Rule: Indefinite pronouns such as someone, anyone, everybody, nobody, and each are always singular and require singular verbs and pronouns.

Example: Someone left his book. (Singular pronoun "his" matches the singular "someone.")

Everybody is responsible for his or her project.

4. Compound Antecedents

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Rule: When antecedents are joined by “and,” use a plural pronoun to reflect the combined subjects. When joined by “or” or “nor,” the pronoun agrees with the nearer noun in number and gender.

Example: Neither Ravi nor his friends brought their IDs. (Plural pronoun “their” agrees with the nearer plural noun “friends.”)

5. Who vs. Whom

Rule: Use “who” when the pronoun acts as the subject of a clause, performing the action. Use “Whom” when it is the object of a verb or preposition, receiving the action.

Example: Who is calling? (Subject) Whom did you call? (Object)

6. Reflexive Pronouns

Rule: Reflexive pronouns (e.g., myself, herself, themselves) are used when the subject and object of a sentence are the same entity, emphasizing that the action reflects back on the subject.

Example: She blamed herself. (The subject “she” and object “herself” are the same.)

7. Than / As

Rule: In comparisons using “than” or “as,” the pronoun case depends on the implied verb. Use subjective case (e.g., I, he) if the pronoun is the subject of the implied clause, and objective case (e.g., me, him) if it's the object.

Example: She is taller than I (am). (Subjective case, implying “I am.”), He runs faster than I (do). I am as tall as he (is). The dog followed her more than me.

8. Indefinite Pronouns (all/some)

Rule: Indefinite pronouns like *All*, *Some*, *Any*, or *None* can be singular or plural depending on the noun they refer to. If the noun is uncountable (e.g., water), use singular; if countable (e.g., books), use plural. Exams often test this flexibility.

Example: All of the water was spilled. (Singular, referring to uncountable “water.”)

9. Avoid Pronoun Ambiguity

Rule: A pronoun must clearly refer to a single, specific noun to avoid confusion. Ambiguous pronouns, where the referent is unclear, are common in exam questions designed to test clarity in sentence construction.

Example: When Ramesh met Suresh, he was very nervous. Who was nervous—Ramesh or Suresh? The pronoun “he” is ambiguous.

10. Use of “One”

Rule: When using the pronoun “one” to refer to a general person, maintain consistency by using “one’s” for the possessive form and avoid switching to “his/her.”

Example: One must keep one’s promise. (Consistent use of “one” and “one’s.”)

Note: When “one” is used in the sense of number (meaning a *particular person*), it is followed by **his**.
Example: *One of the players has hurt his leg.*

11. None + Plural Noun

Rule: The pronoun “none” can take a plural verb when referring to a plural noun, emphasizing individual members of a group.

Example: None of the players have arrived. (Plural verb for plural noun “players.”)

12. Possessive Pronouns

Rule: Possessive pronouns (e.g., mine, hers, theirs) do not take apostrophes, unlike possessive nouns. Incorrect apostrophe use (e.g., her’s) is a common error in exam questions.

Example: That bag is hers. The fault was theirs, not ours.

13. “It” with Collective Nouns

Rule: Use “it” to refer to a singular collective noun when treated as a single unit.

Example: The jury gave its verdict. (Singular collective noun “jury.”)

14. Avoid Ambiguity with Compound Subjects

Rule: In sentences with compound subjects, ensure the pronoun clearly refers to the intended subject to avoid ambiguity. Exams often include sentences with multiple subjects to test clarity.

Example: My sister and my aunt said **she** was tired. (Unclear whether “she” refers to my sister or my aunt.)

Correct: My sister and my aunt said **my sister** was tired.

15. Implied Subject Agreement

Rule: In imperative sentences, pronouns must agree with the implied subject, typically “you,” ensuring consistency in commands.

Example: Submit your homework. (Implied subject “you” matches “your.”)

16. Pronoun Case in Prepositional Phrases

Rule: Pronouns in prepositional phrases (e.g., to, for, with) must be in the objective case (e.g., me, him, her).

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Example: The gift was for her and me. (Objective case for prepositional phrase.)

17. Each Other vs. One Another

Rule: Use “each other” for reciprocal actions between two entities and “one another” for more than two.

Example: The two friends helped each other. The team members supported one another.

18. Possessive Forms Used Before Gerunds

Rule: When a pronoun indicates possession of a gerund (a verb form acting as a noun), use the possessive form (e.g., my, his, her).

Example: I appreciate his singing. (Possessive “his” before gerund “singing.”)

19. Pronoun Agreement with Titles or Roles

Rule: When a pronoun refers to a title or role (e.g., president, teacher), it must agree in number and gender with the person holding the title, not the title itself.

Example: The president announced her decision. (Refers to the person, not the title.)

20. Avoiding Overuse of Reflexive Pronouns

Rule: Reflexive pronouns (e.g., myself, yourself) should not be used as substitutes for subjective (e.g., I, you) or objective (e.g., me, you) pronouns in standard sentences.

Example:

- My friend and myself went to the market. ✗
- My friend and I went to the market. ✓
- Please give the documents to myself. ✗
- Please give the documents to me. ✓

21. Ordering 1st, 2nd & 3rd Person Pronouns

Rule: When I (1st person), You (2nd person), and He/She (3rd person) come together in a sentence, follow these simple rules:

CONTEXT	ORDER OF PRONOUNS	EXAMPLE
Positive / Good Action	(First person → Second person → Third person)	<i>I, you and he will win the match.</i>
Negative / Confession / Blame	(Second person → Third person → First person)	<i>You, he and I are responsible for the mistake.</i>
Respect / Politeness	(Second person → First person → Third person)	<i>You, I and he should attend the meeting.</i>

22. Preferring “That” over “Who or Which”

Rule: The relative pronoun “that” is preferred to “who” or “which” in the following cases:

(i) After Superlatives

This is the best book that I have read. ✓ (Not “which”)

(ii) After Words Like *All, Any, None, Nothing, Only, Same, Few, Much, Little*

He is the only person that can solve this problem.

(iii) After Two Antecedents – One Denoting Person, the Other Denoting Thing

The man and the car that were involved in the accident have been found. ✓

(iv) After Interrogative Pronouns (*Who, What, etc.*)

Who is there that does not want success? ✓

Practice Set: Pronoun

Directions: Each sentence contains an error related to pronoun usage, including case (subject/object), agreement (singular/plural), reflexive forms, or contractions like it's/its. Identify and correct incorrect or misplaced pronouns to ensure proper grammar and clarity.

Practice Set 1

- Neither of the boys brought their ID cards to the examination hall, which led to both of them being denied entry.
- The teacher, along with the students, expressed their gratitude for the support that they had received from the administration.
- Everyone should submit their assignments before the deadline if they want to avoid penalties.
- The principal himself, who rarely interacts directly with students, delivered the orientation speech and praised the student who he believed had made the most progress.
- Who do you think the principal selected for the award?
- It was him who completed the entire project single-handedly, although no one gave him any credit for it.
- Each of the candidates must ensure that they bring their own writing instruments and identification documents to the test venue.
- The two friends congratulated one another for their respective performances, even though the results favored one of them significantly more than the other.
- If I were him I would have helped you that day.
- Many a teacher, along with their students, failed to submit their project on time.
- The team blamed themselves for the loss, although it was clearly a result of poor weather and not their own mistakes.
- Between you and I, I think the company's decision to relocate the headquarters is impractical and rushed.
- The CEO, not the shareholders, made it clear that she herself was accountable for the decisions taken during the crisis.
- It was not them who objected to the proposal; rather, it was the interns who raised concerns about the timeline.
- The boy who I spoke to yesterday said that he had seen the accident happen right before him.
- It is me who am always blamed when things go wrong.
- Both of the sisters have their own way of dealing with stress, but neither of them are willing to talk about it openly.
- Each of the committee members expressed their view on the subject, which was eventually compiled into a single report.
- Such are the men whom history remembers not for their power, but for their ability to remain just in moments of crisis.
- The manager asked both John and myself to complete the review before the weekend so that she could present it to the board.
- Last night I went to my cousin's house and I enjoyed.
- I and he shall complete the task ourselves by tonight.
- It is me who am responsible for the delay, and I will make sure it doesn't happen again.
- The manager, not his assistants, deserve the credit for this achievement.
- The faculty members, each of whom has submitted their feedback, were thanked by the dean during the closing ceremony.

Practice Set 2

- When a person gets too emotional, you often say things you later regret without realizing their impact.
- Him leaving the job so suddenly surprised not only his colleagues but also the management.
- Each of the finalists was asked to submit a photograph of themselves along with the application form.
- Neither of the houses, though recently renovated, have the kind of charm that attracts buyers anymore.
- This is the same boy whom we believe has won the gold medal.
- The report that was compiled by the editor and myself contains critical information about the market's decline.
- It was themselves who insisted on doing the presentation without any help from the mentors.
- Those kind of mistakes usually happen when one doesn't review the report carefully before submission.

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9. The teacher did not know who of the students disobeyed him.
10. You should be careful about one's actions when working in a culturally sensitive environment.
11. The principal, who all the students admired greatly, gave we prefects a personal note of encouragement.
12. My friend is one of those rare people who always thinks of others before themselves.
13. The documents which you had left on the desk, it was misplaced by someone from the maintenance staff.
14. Every student must report to their respective counselor before the beginning of the orientation program.
15. The one who you saw entering the restricted zone is being questioned by the security team.
16. That pen is her's, and she said she'd be upset if anyone used it without asking.
17. Myself and my colleague had been working on the same case long before it was reassigned.
18. All of the team members who participated in the campaign said it was a valuable experience for himself or herself.
19. If the commander is good, the soldiers will respond positively to them.
20. If one wishes to improve their writing, one must read widely and write regularly without fail.
21. There was a teacher, which despite having no prior training, managed the entire session brilliantly.
22. Many a speaker has forgotten their point midway due to poor preparation or nervousness.
23. It was us who completed the last-minute changes just before the deadline, not the other department.
24. The volunteers distributed the blankets between the five families that had been relocated during the storm.
25. Whoever you choose to nominate for the award, be sure to inform they of the responsibilities involved.

Answers and Explanations

Practice Set 1

1. Error: their
Explanation: "Neither" is singular. Use his/her ID cards instead of their.
2. Error: their
Explanation: The pronoun will agree with the first subject as both the subjects are joined by "along with". Correct: *expressed his/her gratitude.*
3. Error: their
Explanation: "Everyone" is singular. Correct: *Everyone should submit his or her assignments...*
4. Error: who
Explanation: When referring to the object of the verb "believed," use whom, not who.
5. Error: Who
Explanation: Correct form: Whom do you think the principal selected for the award?.
6. Error: him
Explanation: After "It was," use the subjective case: It was he who completed...
7. Error: they / their
Explanation: "Each" is singular. Correct: *Each must ensure that he or she brings his or her...*
8. Error: one another
Explanation: "one-another" is correct for more than two people. Correct: *The two friends congratulated each other....*
9. Error: If I were him
Correct: If I were he.
10. Error: their
Correct: his/her
Explanation: Many a" is a singular expression and takes a singular subject, verb, and pronoun.
11. Error: themselves
Explanation: "Team" is collective noun treated as singular. Correct: *The team blamed itself...*
12. Error: I
Explanation: After a preposition (between), use objective case. Correct: *Between you and me...*
13. No error
Explanation: Reflexive "herself" is correct for emphasis and agrees with "she".
14. Error: them
Explanation: After "It was," use subjective form. Correct: *It was they who objected...*
15. Error: who
Explanation: "Whom" is the object of "I spoke to." Correct: *The boy whom I spoke to...*
16. Error: me
Correct: I
Explanation: 'It is I' is correct phrase (use subjective case)
17. Error: are
Explanation: "Neither" is singular. Correct: *Neither of them is willing...*
18. Error: their
Explanation: "Each" is singular. Correct: *Each... expressed his or her view...*
19. Error: whom
Explanation: "Such are the men who history remembers..." — "who" is subject of "remembers".
20. Error: myself
Explanation: Reflexive pronouns should not be used as subjects/objects unnecessarily. Correct: *...asked John and me to complete...*
21. Error: Enjoyed
Explanation: Enjoyed will be followed by "myself"
22. Error: I and He

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Correct: He and I

Explanation: The correct order is "He and I" (politeness rule), and "ourselves" is correct here.

23. Error: Me

Explanation: "It is I who am responsible..."

24. Error: deserve

Explanation: Singular subject (*The manager*) → verb should also be singular

25. Error: their

Explanation: "Each" is singular. Correct: *Each... has submitted his or her feedback...*

Practice Set 2

1. Error: you / their

Explanation: The sentence starts with "a person" (third person), so shift to 'he/she' throughout. Correct: *When a person gets too emotional, he/she often says things he/she later regrets...*

2. Error: Him leaving

Explanation: "Him" is objective; use gerund subject with possessive. Correct: *His leaving the job so suddenly surprised...*

3. Error: themselves

Explanation: Correct: *Each of the finalists was asked to submit a photograph of himself or herself...*

4. Error: have

Explanation: "Neither" is singular. Correct: *Neither of the houses... has the kind of charm...*

5. Error: whom

Explanation: This is the same boy who we believe has won the gold medal.

6. Error: myself

Explanation: Reflexive pronoun cannot be used as subject. Correct: *...compiled by the editor and me...*

7. Error: themselves

Explanation: Reflexive used incorrectly; subject is "It." Correct: *It was they who insisted...*

8. Error: Those kind

Explanation: Use plural demonstrative with plural noun. Correct: *Those kinds of mistakes...*

9. Error: who

Explanation: Replace "who" with "Which".

10. Error: one's

Explanation: Sentence starts with "You" (second person). Avoid person shift. Correct: *...you should be careful about your actions...*

11. Error: we

Explanation: Object of verb "gave." Use objective pronoun. Correct: *...gave us prefects a note...*

12. Error: thinks

Explanation: "People" is plural; "always thinks" is incorrect. Correct: *...people who always think of others before themselves...*

13. Error: it ; was

Explanation: Redundant pronoun; "which" already introduces clause. Correct: *The documents which you had left... were misplaced...*

14. Error: their

Explanation: "Every student" is singular. Correct: *...must report to his or her respective counselor...*

15. Error: who

Explanation: Object of "you saw." Correct: *The one whom you saw entering...*

16. Error: her's

Explanation: Possessive "hers" has no apostrophe. Correct: *That pen is hers...*

17. Error: Myself

Explanation: Reflexive cannot be used as subject. Correct: *My colleague and I had been working...(ordering of persons)*

18. Error: himself or herself

Explanation: Antecedent "members" is plural. Correct: *...valuable experience for themselves.*

19. Error: them

Explanation: "Replace 'them' with 'him'."

20. Error: their

Explanation: Maintain pronoun consistency with "One." Correct: *If one wishes... one must improve his or her writing...*

21. Error: which

Explanation: "Which" refers to things, not people. Correct: *There was a teacher, who despite...*

22. Error: their

Explanation: "Many a" is singular in construction. Correct: *Many a speaker has forgotten his or her point...*

23. Error: us

Explanation: Subjective case after "It was." Correct: *It was we who completed...*

24. Error: between

Explanation: Use "among" for more than two. Correct: *...distributed the blankets among the five families...*

25. Error: they

Explanation: Object form needed. Correct: *...inform them of the responsibilities*