

79 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns, such as “anyone,” “someone,” and “everyone,” are used to refer to a person or object, or a group of people or objects, without explaining who or what they are.

See also:
Present simple 1
Forming questions 34

79.1 “ANYONE” AND “SOMEONE”

“Someone” and “somebody” refer to an unspecified person in a positive statement or question.
“Anyone” and “anybody” refer to an unspecified person in a question or negative statement.



Did **anyone** call me this morning?

Yes, **someone** called you at 11 o'clock.



Do you want to talk to **somebody**?

“Somebody” means the same as “someone,” but is more informal.

No, I don't want to talk to **anybody**.

“Anybody” means the same as “anyone,” but is more informal.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Is **someone** working late?



I didn't give **anybody** your name.



Can **somebody** carry my bag?



Did **anyone** buy a gift for Mrs. Tan?



I gave **somebody** a flower.



I don't know **anyone** in this town.



Someone gave me a present.



Did **anybody** here send me this letter?



79.2 "EVERYONE" AND "NO ONE"

"Everyone" refers to a whole group of people.

"No one" means no person in a group.

"No one" is written as two words.

Why is there **no one** in the office?



Everyone is at the big meeting.

The singular form of the verb is used with "everyone" and "everybody."



"Everybody" means the same as "everyone," but is less formal.

Where is **everybody**?



I don't know, there's **nobody** here.

The singular form of the verb is used with "nobody" and "no one."

"Nobody" means the same as "no one."



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Nobody wants to come with me.



I'm at the park with **everyone** if you'd like to join us.



Everybody has some kind of special skill.



There was **nobody** but me at work until 10am.



! COMMON MISTAKES "NO ONE" AND "ANYONE"

"No one" and "nobody" go in positive statements and questions.
"Anyone" and "anybody" go in negative statements and questions.

This is a negative statement, so "anyone" or "anybody" is used.

There isn't **anyone** here. ✓

There isn't **no one** here. ✗

This is a negative statement, so "no one" is incorrect.

79.3 "SOMETHING" AND "ANYTHING"

"Something" and "anything" refer to an unspecified or unnamed object or thing. "Something" can only be used in questions and positive statements, whereas "anything" can be used in negative statements as well as questions and positive statements.

Here "something" has a more general meaning, as the speaker may not have a specific thing in mind.

Can I have **something** to eat?

Yes, have **something** from the cupboard.

Here "something" refers to a specific, unnamed thing that the speaker has in mind.



The singular form of the verb is used with "anything" and "something."

Is there **anything** I can help with?

No, there isn't **anything** you can do.

This statement is negative, so "anything" is used, not "something."



FURTHER EXAMPLES

"Anything" used in positive statements shows the possibilities are unlimited.

Have **anything** you want.



Something that I've always enjoyed is kayaking with my friends.



Anything baked by my grandmother tastes delicious.



I know I've forgotten **something**, but I can't think what it is.



There's **something** I need to tell you.



I'd do **anything** to be able to sing like her.



We don't have **anything** in common.



Something spooky happened last night.



79.4 "NOTHING" AND "EVERYTHING"

"Nothing" means that there are no available objects or things.

Tim and James have **nothing** in common.

There is no single thing that Tim and James have in common.



"Everything" means all the possible objects or things are available.

Tim and Dan do **everything** together.



Where "nothing" is used in a positive statement, "anything" can be used in a negative statement with the same meaning.

There's **nothing** I want to buy here.

[There isn't anything I want to buy here.]

The verb is positive.

The verb is negative.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

There's **nothing** I love more than a sunny day.



I want to see **everything** at the museum.



Everything is going well at the moment.



I know absolutely **nothing** about Geography.



Nothing at the exhibition was any good.



I do **everything** to the best of my ability.



I love that new Italian restaurant. **Everything** tastes so good!



Nothing interests me about politics.

