Noun groups and their use

We use language to talk about people and things. The words we choose are arranged into groups, either around a noun or a verb. They are called noun groups or verb groups.

- **Noun groups** tell us which people or things are being talked about.
- **Verb groups** tell us what is being said about the people or things.

Noun Group

- You can use a noun group to refer to someone or something by naming them.
- You do this by using a general name called a **noun** or **common noun**.

Example

> Common noun

Women tend not to have much money as men.

- You can also use a specific name, called a **proper noun**.
- Proper nouns are mainly used for people, places, and events.

Example

> Proper noun

Mary likes strawberries.

Determiners with Common Nouns

- A **common noun** is used when a person or thing you are referring to **belongs in a set with others** that are similar in some way.
    - If you just want to say that the person or thing is in that set, you use a **general determiner**.

Example

> General determiner   General determiner

I met ***a*** girl who was ***a*** student there.
Have you got ***any*** comment to make about that?

> General determiner

- If you want to show which member of a set you are talking about, you use a *specific determiner* with a common noun.

Example

Specific pronoun   Specific pronoun

I put *my* arm round *her* shoulders.

She came to see me *this* morning.

Specific pronoun

Personal and Demonstrative Pronouns

- A pronoun can be used if you decide not to name the person or thing.
- You do this because the person or thing has already been named.

Example

Could *I* speak to Sue, please? I am sorry, *she* does not work here now.

Personal pronoun
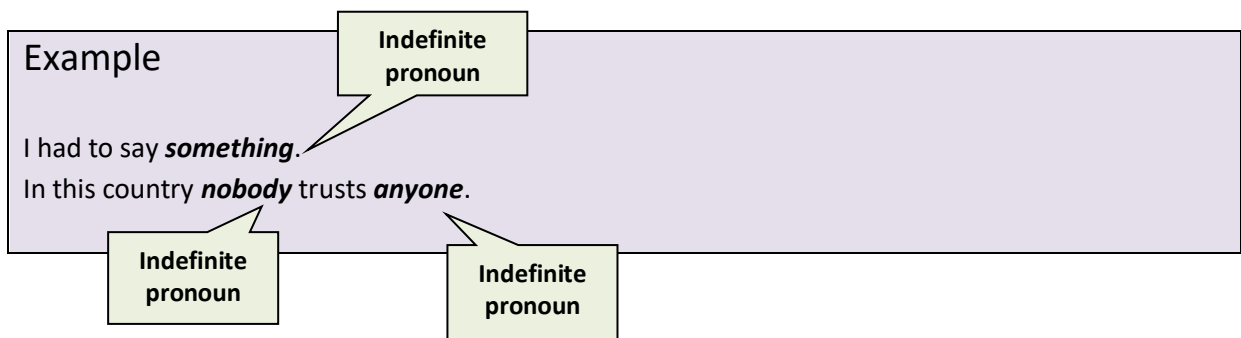
'She' is used here to replace the name of the person (Sue)

Example

I have got two boys and looking at *them* I can see a little bit of myself.

Demonstrative pronoun

Indefinite Pronouns

- You may decide not to name the person or thing at all because:
    - you do not want to
    - you think it is not important
    - you do not know
    - you want to be vague or mysterious
    -
- In such cases you use an ***indefinite pronoun*** which does not refer to any particular person or thing.

Example

Indefinite pronoun

I had to say ***something***.
In this country ***nobody*** trusts ***anyone***.

Indefinite pronoun

Indefinite pronoun

References

Adapted from Sinclair, J. (Ed.). (1994). *Collins COBUILD English grammar*, Harpers Collins Publisher.