
Her and I:
How to Banish Painful
Personal-Pronoun Pairings

I never made a mistake in grammar but one in my life and as soon as I done it I seen it.

—CARL SANDBURG IN *A DICTIONARY OF LITERARY QUOTATIONS*

My father is living with my wife and I.

A businessman sent this statement out to thousands of readers. Does the *I* hurt your ears? If it doesn't—if the *I* sounds right to you, or if it sounds funny but you aren't sure why, or if you never know whether to say *I* or *me* but you favor *I* because you've heard lots of otherwise well-informed people talk that way—you're not alone. Pronoun misuse saturates American parlance.

The trouble arises in sentences that involve two parties. No one would say, "My father is living with I." What trips people up is the *and*.

So get rid of it, if only for a moment. Cover the *and* with your mind's hand before you speak or write.

Example:

Him/He and me/I went fishing this morning.

Cover up the *and*. Look at each pronoun by itself:

Him/He went fishing this morning.

Me/I went fishing this morning.

No problem. No one would say *Him went fishing* or *Me went fishing*. Don't let that little troublemaker, *and*, change a thing. If it's *He went fishing* and *I went fishing*, then it's *He and I went fishing*.

Word Up!

Every time.

If your ear needs recalibrating, try these sentences. Say the correct versions out loud. Repeat until what is right sounds right. (Note that the *I/me* and *we/us* choices come last. As Bonnie Trenga, author of *The Curious Case of the Misplaced Modifier*, says, putting first-person pronouns last is “the polite thing to do. ‘Me first’ is a bad attitude in life, and so it is in grammar, too.”³⁷)

<i>He/Him</i> and <i>I/me</i> went to the store to get ice cream.	He and I went to the store to get ice cream.
The armchair was big enough for <i>her/she</i> and <i>I/me</i> .	The armchair was big enough for her and me.
Are you coming to the game with <i>she/her</i> and <i>me/I</i> ?	Are you coming to the game with her and me?
<i>Her/she</i> and <i>I/me</i> will drive you home.	She and I will drive you home.
That hybrid truck is perfect for <i>she/her</i> and <i>me/I</i> .	That hybrid truck is perfect for her and me.
Throw the football to <i>her/she</i> and <i>I/me</i> .	Throw the football to her and me.
Build <i>him/he</i> and <i>I/me</i> a house.	Build him and me a house.
Want to hear about <i>he/his</i> and <i>my/I</i> 's plan?	Want to hear about his and my plan?
The bleachers have plenty of empty spots for <i>they/them</i> and <i>us/we</i> to sit comfortably.	The bleachers have plenty of empty spots for them and us to sit comfortably.
With practice, <i>him/he</i> and <i>I/me</i> learned new grammar habits.	With practice, he and I learned new grammar habits.

37. Bonnie Trenga, “Between Me and You?” *Grammar Girl* blog, March 27, 2009, <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/between-me-and-you.aspx>.