



## DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

### Who or Whom?

Choosing between the various forms of the pronoun **who**, (who, whose, whom, whoever, whomever) can be very confusing. Knowing the difference between **subjective**, **objective**, and **possessive** pronouns can help one determine which form of **who** to use.

#### Pronoun Forms

To say that a pronoun is **subjective** is to say that it is acting as the subject of a sentence or clause.

Ex: **He** went to the movies last Friday. **She** stayed home.

To say that a pronoun is **objective** is to say that it is acting as the object of a sentence or clause. In other words, it is receiving the action of the sentence rather than participating in it.

Ex: Tom called **her** yesterday. Tina sent a text message to **him** the next day.

Finally, a pronoun is **possessive** when it indicates ownership. Possessive pronouns often replace names.

Ex: This is Dan's laptop. This is also **his** cell phone. This is the Smiths' house. That is **their** fence.

#### Parallels in Form

The pronoun forms of **he**, **she**, and **they** are parallel to the forms of **who**. If a sentence would require the objective form of "he," it would require the objective form of "who." Consider the chart below:

	Subjective	Objective	Possessive
Singular	he / she	him / her	his / hers
	who	whom	whose
Plural	they	them	their
	who	whom	whose

To choose correctly among the forms of **who**, one can simply re-phrase the sentence in order to choose between **he / she** and **him / her**.

If the pronoun is **him** or **her**, write **whom**. If the pronoun is **he** or **she**, write **who**.

Ex: **Who** is responsible? (**He** is responsible?)  
**Whom** shall they ask to the party? (Shall they ask **her** to the party?)  
Give the book to **whomever**. (Give the book to **him**.)  
Give the book to **whoever** wants it. ("**She** wants it.")  
**Whoever** shows up first will win the prize. (**He** shows up first.)

#### "Whose" versus "Who's"

**Who's**, which is often mistakenly used in the place of the possessive form of **who**, is actually a contraction of **who is**. **Whose** is the only correct possessive form of **who**. It can be used to refer to people as well as inanimate objects.

Ex: **Who's** that standing on the corner? (**Who is** that standing on the corner?)  
**Whose** book is this?  
This book, **whose** title is A Wrinkle in Time, is easy and enjoyable to read.