

Serbian Personal Pronouns (Lične zamenice u srpskom)

A **personal pronoun** can refer to the person or people **speaking** ('first person'), **spoken to** ('second person') or **spoken about** ('third person').

For **each person**, a pronoun has its distinct form in both **singular** (ex. **ja** 'I') and **plural** (ex. **mi** 'we'). In addition, depending on its function in a sentence (eg., subject, direct object, indirect object), a pronoun can have seven different case forms: **nominative**, **accusative**, **genitive**, **dative**, **locative**, **instrumental** and **vocative**. Don't panic! For many cases pronouns have the same forms (this is called the inflectional syncretism). Table 1 below illustrates that.

The abbreviations used in Table 1 below:

f =feminine gender	they-m = they referring to masculine persons/things
m =masculine gender	they-f =they referring to feminine persons/things
n =neuter gender	they-n =they referring to neuter persons/things

Table 1: Declension of Serbian Personal Pronouns

SINGULAR	1st person (ja 'I')	2nd person (ti 'you')	3 rd person masculine (on 'he')	3 rd person neuter (ono 'it')	3 rd person feminine (ona 'she')
Nominative	ja	ti	on	ono	ona
Accusative	mene, me	tebe, te	njega, ga 'him'	njega, ga 'it'	nju, je, ju 'her'
Genitive	mene	tebe	njega 'of him'	njega 'of it'	nje 'of her'
Dative	meni, mi	tebi, ti	njemu, mu 'to him'	njemu, mu 'to it'	njoj, joj 'to her'
Locative	meni	tebi	njemu 'him'	njemu 'it'	njoj 'her'
Instrumental	mnom	tobom	njim 'him'	njim 'it'	njom 'her'
Vocative		ti			
PLURAL	mi 'we'	vi 'you'	oni 'they'-m	oni 'they'-n	one 'they'-f
Nominative	mi	vi	oni 'they'	oni 'they'	one 'they'
Accusative	nas	vas	njih, ih 'them'	njih, ih 'them'	njih, ih 'them'
Genitive	nas	vas	njih, ih 'of them'	njih, ih 'of them'	njih, ih 'of them'
Dative	nama, nam	vama, vam	njima, im 'to them'	njima, im 'to them'	njima, im 'to them'
Locative	nama	vama	njima, im 'them'	njima, im 'them'	njima, im 'them'
Instrumental	nama	vama	njima, im 'them'	njima, im 'them'	njima, im 'them'
Vocative		vi			

The pronominal forms might look overwhelming, but there are some logical patterns. Grammar is logical, for the most part.

First, you probably noted that for **dative**, **accusative** and **genitive** cases, there is more than one pronoun form. For example, the accusative singular pronouns have two forms for each person: **mene, me**; **tebe, te** and **njega, ga**. The first form is a full (or accented) pronominal form, the second one is truncated, unaccented form, or what grammarians call **pronominal clitic form**. In everyday speech, we use the truncated or clitic pronoun. The full pronouns are used only for emphasis.

Also, you may observe that for the third person, we have three different forms, which are based on gender: masculine, neuter and feminine. English distinguishes three genders for singular pronouns (he, it, she) but not for plural pronouns. In Serbian however, the three-way gender distinction is made for plural pronouns as well. So for 'they' we have: **oni** 'they' (masculine); **ona** 'they' (neuter) and **one** 'they' (feminine). However, for cases other than nominative plural, the gender is not distinguished. Finally, something simple!

Unlike English, which does not distinguish between **you-singular** and **you-plural** (unless you say 'you all'), Serbian has two second person pronouns: **ti** 'you' (singular) and **vi** 'you' (plural). In addition, **vi** can also be used to refer to a single person, as a formal address. This formality is reflected in orthography by capitalizing the first letter in **Vi**.

Note that only the second person pronouns, **ti** and **vi**, have the corresponding vocative case forms, which are equal to the corresponding nominative forms. Other pronouns lack the vocative case forms, which makes sense, considering that the vocative case is used to call somebody present in the discourse (like 'hey, you!'). One cannot address himself/herself (hey, I!) or somebody not present in the discourse (hey, she!).

What happens if you refer to a group that consists of males and females? Like **Marija i Jovan** 'Maria and Jovan'. The masculine gender wins, as predictable. So, you'll use: **oni** 'they' (masculine) to refer to Marija and Jovan.

And finally, instrumental singular pronouns, **mnom**, **njim**, **njom** can be used as **mnome**, **njime** and **njome** when there is no preposition preceding.

Example:

On se ponosi sa **njom**. 'He is proud of her.'

On se ponosi **njome**. 'He is proud of her.'

Table 3: Some examples of pronouns used in sentences

	Serbian	English (the relevant pronoun is underlined)	Grammatical function of the pronoun in a sentence and its case
1.	Ona je lepa.	<u>She</u> is beautiful.	ona = subject (nominative)
2.	Oni su gladni.	<u>They</u> are hungry.	oni = subject (nominative)
3.	One su srećne.	<u>They</u> (all females) are happy.	one = subject (nominative)
4.	Ja te volim.	I love <u>you</u> .	ja = subject (nominative); te = object (accusative)
5.	Ja sam ga video.	I saw <u>him</u> .	ja = subject (nominative); ga = object (accusative)
6.	Ti se bojiš nje .	<u>You</u> are afraid of <u>her</u> .	ti = subject (nominative); nje = object (accusative)
7.	Ona šeta sa njima .	<u>She</u> is strolling with <u>them</u> .	ona = subject (nominative); njima = object (instrumental)
8.	Daj nam vremena	Give <u>us (some) time</u> .	nam = indirect object (dative)
9.	On je dobio knjigu od njih .	He got <u>that</u> from <u>them</u> .	njih = object (genitive)
10.	Nema ih ovde.	<u>They</u> are not <u>here</u> .	ih = object (genitive)

A few notes about some peculiar examples above.

You might wonder why we have such peculiar word order in example 4: subject – object-verb. **Ja te** volim, can literally be translated as 'I you love'.

When we use truncated (clitic) forms of pronouns and verbs, all the clitics must appear immediately after the first accented word or after the first phrase. In the example above, the **accusative pronominal clitic te** 'you' appears after the pronoun **ja** 'I'.

So, one cannot say: *Ja volim te (though, one can say: ja volim tebe, where 'tebe' is a full pronoun).

Please refer to the file on [clitics](#) and their order in the sentence.

In example 8, Daj **nam** vremena, the verb form **daj** 'give' is the [imperative verb form](#).

And now some exercises! If you get stuck or are not sure you got it right, please [email](#) me for help.

Exercise 1 – Fill out the appropriate case forms of personal pronouns in sentences below

Using the pronouns below (underlined in the English gloss) insert their appropriate case forms. For convenience, I have indicated which case of a pronoun goes with which sentence.

For this exercise, use both full and short forms of pronouns. Remember that short or clitic pronouns always go in the second place in the sentence.

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|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. genitive | 4. dative | 7. instrumental |
| 2. genitive | 5. nominative | 8. genitive |
| 3. accusative | 6. nominative | 9. accusative |

1. Ja se bojim _____	I'm afraid of <u>him</u> .
2. On se setio _____	He remembered <u>me</u> .
3. Marija voli _____	Marija likes them _____
4. Dragan je dao ružu _____.	Dragan gave a rose <u>to her</u> .
5. _____ su dobri.	<u>They</u> (feminine) are good.
6. _____ su nemirna.	<u>They</u> (neuter) are good.
6. Volim _____.	I love <u>you</u> (plural)
7. Marija ide sa _____.	Marija is going with <u>me</u> .
8. Zorica stalno sedi pored _____.	Zorica always sits by <u>them</u> .
9. Milan stoji uz _____.	Milan is standing by <u>her</u> .

Exercise 2 – Translate the following sentences

For this exercise you need to know both the [present tense](#) and [past tense](#). If you don't have a bi-directional Serbian-English-Serbian dictionary, you may go to the website: <http://www.krstarica.com/dictionary/> to get the words you need for this exercise.

1.	He played with them. (them – masculine)
2.	They (feminine) don't speak to her.
3.	She and I are going to the store.
4.	They (masculine) gave her a book.
5.	She hates him.
6.	I don't like them.
7.	We see them.
8.	She is singing with me.