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Determiners are words placed in front of a noun to make it clear what the noun refers to (e.g. the, my, this, some, twenty, each, any). They cannot be used alone. But sometimes determiners may act as pronouns (i.e. without a noun following and when the meaning is clear without including the noun).

Compare:

- Would you like some bread with your soup? - I've got a bar of chocolate here. Would you like some?

Each, every, either, neither, both, half, and all are distributive determiners. They refer to individual members of a group, or to a group of people, animals, or things. They express how something is distributed, divided, or shared.

## Each, every, either, neither, both, half, all as determiners

## Each

'Each' is used to refer to members of a group as separate individuals.
We use 'each':

- before countable nouns, usually singular nouns;
- in affirmative and interrogative sentences;
- with a singular verb.
- Each boy has his own helmet.
- We want to speak to each teacher privately.

We can use 'each' with of and an article. We can also use 'each' after an object - direct or indirect.

- Each of them received a gift.
- Would you like to speak to each of the boys?
- I want to give them each a kiss before I go.


## Every

We use 'every' almost the same way as we use 'each', and often, they are interchangeable.
But we use 'every':

- to refer to people or things together in a group;
- with a singular verb.
- Pass it around so that every student gets one.
- We'd like to hear from every member of the group.


## Either/neither

We use 'either' to refer to one or the other of two people, animals, or things.
'Either' is used in affirmative and interrogative sentences.

- Either color will do; I don't care.
- Would you like either one of these last two desserts?
'Neither' is the opposite of 'either'. We use 'neither' to mean not one nor the other of two people, animals, or things.
- We use 'neither' in negative sentences.
- Sometimes, we use 'neither' followed by of, with or without an article. We must always
use of when neither comes before a pronoun.
- When we use 'neither' with of and another determiner, (my, his, these, the, etc.), we use it before a plural noun.
- Neither of the boys admitted his guilt.
- Neither parent knew where the child had gone.
- Neither of us wants to be here.
- We use 'neither' with a singular verb unless it is followed by of, in which case we can use singular or plural, with the plural verb being less formal.


## All/half

Both 'all' and 'half' tell us the quantity of a group. We use 'all' to refer to the whole group or everyone or thing in the group. 'All' means that nothing and/or no one has been left out. We use 'all' with both countable and uncountable nouns in negative, affirmative, and interrogative statements.

- All life is important.
- All students deserve the help they need.
- We can also use 'all' with the definite article the to describe a specific group, as well as with of the. We can use 'all' with other determiners.
- Where are all the children?
- I want to see all of the students in my office now.
- Where are all my toys?
- Both a singular or plural verb can be used with 'all', depending on the noun it is modifying. If it modifies a noun that takes a plural verb, we use the plural and vice versa.
- We use 'half' to refer to a part of a group that is divided into two sections. We also use 'half' to refer to measurements, followed by an indefinite article. We can also use 'half' and the definite article the, as well as other determiners.
- The recipe calls for half a lime.
- Only half of the group wants to go hiking.


## Both

We use 'both' to refer to a pair of people or things.

- We can only use 'both' with plural, countable nouns because it refers to two things. We use 'both' with a plural verb.
- I had both children in Hawaii.
- Both flights have been delayed.
- 'Both' can be used with of, with or without an article. However, when 'both' is followed by a plural pronoun, we must use of after both.
- Both of us want kids.
- Both of the children were born there.


## Each, either, neither, all, half, and both as pronouns

## Each

We can use 'each' as a pronoun (i.e. without a noun) where the noun is known or obvious. However, using 'each one' or 'each of them' is more common.

- I have two sisters, and each has her own style.
- What desserts do you want? I would like one of each, please.


## Either/neither

We can use 'either' as a pronoun when the noun is known or obvious. Again, we use a singular verb.

- Do you want the red shirt or black shirt? Either is fine. ('either' refers to the 'shirts')
- There are two kinds, but either will do. ('either' refers to 'two kinds')

We can use 'neither' as a pronoun when the noun to which it refers is known or obvious.

- The two boys knew the truth, but neither wanted to admit it. ('neither' refers to 'the two boys')
- Would you like the orange or black tie for your costume? Neither. ('neither' refers to
the 'ties')


## All/half

We can use 'all' and 'half' as pronouns when the noun is known or obvious.

- How much ice cream do you want? Can I have it all? ('all' refers to 'ice cream')
- All has been forgiven.
- Can I have a piece of that apple? You can have half. ('half' refers to the 'apple')
- Half are already gone.

Again, 'all' and 'half' take both singular and plural verbs depending on the noun to which it refers.

## Both

We can also use 'both' as a pronoun when the noun is known or obvious. We always use a plural verb because 'both' is plural.

- Are my parents here? Yes, both arrived at the same time. ('both' refers to 'parents') - We have two options. I'd like to see both. ('both' refers to 'two options')

Here's a short video from Ronan Kelly explaining how to use 'both', 'either' and 'neither':

Read more on the topic:

Pronouns and Determiners: Other, Others, the Other(s) or Another
Pronouns and Determiners: Quantifiers

Possession: Determiners, Pronouns, Apostrophe 's

