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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](#)