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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 two ties')*

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](#)