

38. Personal pronouns (3) - *y*, *en*

1 *Y, en*

The words *y* and *en* are object pronouns referring to places or things. As with other object pronouns, they come before the verb or auxiliary:

J'ai renoncé **aux cigarettes** - J'**y** ai renoncé

I've given up cigarettes - I've given them up

Elle s'est occupée **de l'affaire** - Elle s'**en** est occupée

She dealt with the matter - She dealt with it

2 *Y*

2.1 *Y* can replace words and phrases introduced by *à*:

Elle a consacré toute sa vie **à la médecine** ⇒ Elle **y** a consacré toute sa vie

She devoted her whole life to medicine ⇒ She devoted her whole life to it

Etes-vous parvenu **à le faire**? - Oui, j'**y** suis parvenu

Did you manage to do it? Yes I did (manage it)

2.2 *Y* meaning *there*

Y can also have the meaning of *there*:

Je les ai laissés dans la cuisine, mais ils n'**y** sont plus

*I put them in the kitchen, but they're no longer **there***

2.3 *Y* in idioms

There are many idioms involving *y*. Here is a selection:

Cela s'est passé il **y** a trente ans - *That happened thirty years ago*

Rien n'**y** fait - *It's no use*

Elle n'**y** peut rien - *There's nothing she can do about it*

Tu n'**y** arriveras jamais - *You'll never manage*

Je vais m'**y** mettre demain - *I'll start tomorrow*

Elle s'**y** est prise à plusieurs fois - *She tried several times*

Il s'**y** connaît en voitures - *He knows all about cars*

Il s'**y** retrouve très bien - *He's coping very well*

3 *En*

3.1 *En* can replace words and phrases introduced by *de*:

Il se souvient bien **de cette journée** ⇒ Il s'**en** souvient bien

He remembers that day well ⇒ He remembers it well

Je n'ai pas le droit **de le faire** - Si, tu **en** as le droit

I don't have the right to do it - Yes you do (have the right)

3.2 *En* replacing *de* as article

The same rule applies where the *de* is not a preposition (as in **de cette journée**) but an article (as in **du chocolat**):

Je voudrais **du chocolat / de la confiture** - J'**en** voudrais

I'd like some chocolate / jam - I'd like some

Je voudrais **des cigarettes** - J'**en** voudrais
I'd like some cigarettes - I'd like some

- 3.3** *En* can also replace nouns introduced by *un, une*, even though it does not contain *de*, because the idea of "of" is implied. Note that in affirmative sentences *un* and *une* are retained, but not in negative sentences:

Est-ce que tu veux un chocolat? - Oui, j'**en** veux **un**
Do you want a chocolate? - Yes, I do want one (i.e. of them)
Est-ce que tu veux un chocolat? - Non, je n'**en** veux pas
Do you want a chocolate? - No, I don't want one (i.e. of them)

- 3.4** A similar structure is used for the following expressions of quantity: *plusieurs, quelques* (which becomes *quelques-un(e)s*), *aucun, autre, beaucoup, plein, trop, assez, peu, plus, moins, autant, un kilo, une bouteille* etc. and all numerals:

Tu **en** veux **un autre**? J'**en** ai **plusieurs**
Do you want another one (i.e. of them)? I have several (i.e. of them)

3.5 *En* in idioms

As with *y*, there are many idioms involving *en*. Here is a selection:

A **en** croire les journaux... - *If the papers are to be believed...*
Va-t'**en** - *Go away!*
J'**en** ai pour 2 heures - *I'll be / It'll take me 2 hours*
J'**en** ai assez (de)... - *I've had enough (of)...*
J'**en** ai marre / ras-le-bol (de)... - *I'm fed up (with)...*
Il lui **en** veut (d'avoir fait...) - *He's annoyed with him / her (for having done...)*
Il s'**en** est pris à moi - *He took it / his anger out on me*
Tu t'**en** sors? - *Can you manage?*