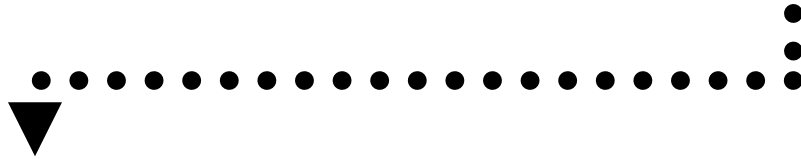


# WORD CHOICE TIP 4



## Know the difference between *who/whoever* and *whom/whomever*.

**Who** and **whoever** will be the subjects of verbs. Use these forms when a sentence has a leftover verb that needs a subject. Read this example:

Nicholas, [**who/whom**] loathes lima beans, will storm out of the house if he discovers that Sherry is cooking this vegetable for dinner.

Before making a decision, verify that all of the verbs have subjects.

Nicholas, [**who/whom**] loathes lima beans, will storm out of the house if he discovers that Sherry is cooking this vegetable for dinner.

The verb **will storm** has **Nicholas** as its subject. The verb **discovers** has **he** as its subject. And the verb **is cooking** has **Sherry** as its subject. **Loathes**, however, has no subject, so you need to choose **who**, the subject form:

Nicholas, **who** loathes lima beans, will storm out of the house if he discovers that Sherry is cooking this vegetable for dinner.

**Whoever** works the same way:

You can give this last chocolate-broccoli muffin to [**whoever/whomever**] needs a serving of vegetables.

When you analyze the verbs, you can determine the form you need:

You can give this last chocolate-broccoli muffin to [**whoever/whomever**] needs a serving of vegetables.

The verb **can give** has **you** as its subject, but the verb **needs** is lonely. It needs **whoever**, the subject form. You might be used to **whom** following **to**—for example, **to whom it may concern**. But in that short clause, the verb **may concern** already has a subject, **it**. A verb must have a subject, even if that means **who/whoever** follows a preposition like **to**.

You can give this last chocolate-broccoli muffin to **whoever** needs a serving of vegetables.

**Whom** and **whomever** will be objects in sentences—direct or indirect objects and objects of a preposition. Use these forms when every verb in a sentence already has a subject. Here is an example:

Georgette searched the mall for her friends, [**who/whom**] she found flirting with cute guys at the food court.

Before you make a decision, analyze the verbs:

Georgette searched the mall for her friends, [who/whom] she found flirting with cute guys in the food court.

Since the verb **searched** has **Georgette** as its subject and the verb **found** has **she** as its subject, you do **not** need another subject. Use the **object** form instead:

Georgette searched the mall for her friends, **whom** she found flirting with cute guys in the food court.

**Whomever** works the same way:

You can give this steaming bowl of squid eyeball stew to [whoever/whomever] you want.

Notice how all of the verbs already have subjects:

You can give this steaming bowl of squid eyeball stew to [whoever/whomever] you want.

So you need the **object** form:

You can give this steaming bowl of squid eyeball stew to **whomever** you want.

## Quick Test

Make the appropriate choice for each sentence below.

1. At red lights, my friend Javier tries to race [whoever/whomever] pulls up beside him.
2. Susan, [who/whom] was in an ugly mood, pushed past a Girl Scout trying to sell cookies.
3. Noel, [who/whom] I've known since middle school, has decided to trade in his ancient Honda.
4. You should try to impress [whoever/whomever] has a fat wallet.
5. The Johnsons, [who/whom] everyone in the neighborhood hates, let their noisy dogs bark all night.



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