

y & en

Two pronouns which
you cannot do without

y

You may have been
taught that
y means there.

y

In fact, “there” is only
one of a large number of
possible meanings.

In these examples, y does indeed mean there.

J'y habite.	I live there .
Elle y a connu son futur mari.	She met her future husband there .
Ils y vont ce soir.	They're going there this evening.
Il y a un très bon restaurant.	There's a very good restaurant there .
Tu y as vu Sylvie?	Did you see Sylvie there ?
On va y construire un hôtel.	They're going to build a hotel there .

y

But, as you will see,
y is a pronoun...

y

...and the purpose of a
pronoun is
to **replace** something.

y

The purpose of **y** is to
replace
à + something

$$y = \grave{a} + T$$

The pronoun **y** can only be used to refer to inanimate objects, ideas or places.

In short, it must refer to **Something** not **Someone**.

$$y = a + T$$

Put another way,
 y can refer to
anything but a person.

$$y = \grave{a} + T$$

So think of it as replacing
 $\grave{a} + \text{a thing } (\grave{a} + T)$

In this example,
y means there.

Nous allons à Paris demain.

In this example,
y means there.

Nous allons à Paris demain.

becomes y

In this example,
y means there.

Nous allons demain.

y

No!



In this example,
y means there.

Nous allons demain.

Yes!

y

Pronouns are
placed before
verbs

In this example,
y means there.

Nous y allons demain.

We're going there tomorrow.

But in this example,
y means something else.

Je pensais à l'examen.

I was thinking about the exam.

But in this example,
y means something else.

Je pensais à l'examen.
becomes y

But in this example,
y means something else.

J'*y* pensais.

But in this example,
y means something else.

J'y pensais.

I was thinking about it.

And in this example,
y means something else again.

Il s'intéresse au sport.

He is interested in sport.

And in this example,
y means something else again.

Il s'intéresse au sport.

becomes y

And in this example,
y means something else again.

Il s'*y* intéresse.

And in this example,
y means something else again.

Il s'*y* intéresse.

He is interested in it.

y

What does y mean in
these examples?

Je n'arrive pas à m'y habituer.

(where y = au bruit)

s'habituer à : to get used to

I just can't get used to it.

(to the noise)

Le directeur y répondra.

(where y = à la lettre)

The headmaster will answer it.

(the letter)

Il y rêve depuis janvier.

(where y = à un nouveau
téléphone portable)

rêver à : to dream about

*He's been dreaming about it
since January.*

(about the mobile phone)

Elle n'y croit plus.

(where y = à l'amour)

croire à : to believe in

She no longer believes in it.

(in love)

Nous y avons assisté.

(where y = au concert)

assister à : to be present at

We were present at it.

(at the concert)

y

Y can also replace
en + something

Mon oncle habite en France.

My uncle lives in France.

Mon oncle y habite.

My uncle lives there.

y

In short, y means
whatever it needs to mean
to make sense!

en

You may have been
taught that
en means of it or of them.

en

In fact, “of it” and “of them” are only two of a range of possible meanings.

In these examples, en does indeed mean of it/them.

Elle en a peur.	She is afraid of it .
J' en ai marre.	I've had enough of it .
Tu en as assez?	Do you have enough of it ?
Il en a trouvé trois.	He found three of them .
On en a vu beaucoup.	We saw a lot of them .
J' en garde les meilleurs.	I keep the best of them .

en

But, like *y*,
en is a pronoun...

en

...and the purpose of a
pronoun is
to **replace** something.

en

The purpose of **en** is to
replace
de + something

en = de + T

The pronoun **en** can only be used to refer to inanimate objects, ideas or places.

In short, it must refer to **Something** not **Someone**.

en = de + T

Put another way,
en can refer to
anything but a person.

$$\text{en} = \text{de} + \text{T}$$

So think of it as replacing
 $\text{de} + \text{a thing} (\text{de} + \text{T})$

In this example,
en means of them.

J'ai perdu la moitié
de mes CDs.

I've lost half of my CDs.

In this example,
en means of them.

J'ai perdu la moitié
de mes CDs.

becomes en

In this example,
en means of them.

J'ai perdu la moitié.

en

No!



In this example,
en means of them.

J'ai perdu la moitié.

Yes!

en

Pronouns are
placed before
verbs

In this example,
en means of them.

J'en ai perdu la moitié.

I've lost half of them.

But in this example,
en means something else.

Nous parlons des élections.

We're talking about the
elections.

But in this example,
en means something else.

Nous parlons des élections.

becomes en

But in this example,
en means something else.

Nous en parlons.

But in this example,
en means something else.

Nous en parlons.

We're talking about them.

And sometimes, *en* is not translated at all into English.

Je ne veux plus de salade.

I don't want any more salad.

And sometimes, en is not translated at all into English but must not be omitted.

Je ne veux plus de salade.

becomes en

And sometimes, **en** is not translated at all into English but **must not be omitted.**

Je n'**en** veux plus.

And sometimes, **en** is not translated at all into English but **must not be omitted.**

Je n'**en** veux plus.

I don't want any more.

en

What does `en` mean in
these examples?

J'en ai perdu la clef.

(where en = de la salle)

I've lost the key to it.

(to the room)

Il en est l'auteur.

(where en = du livre)

He's the author.

(of the book)

Nous en avons remarqué un
grand nombre.

(where en = de papillons)

We noticed a great many of them.

(a great many butterflies)

Je vais m'en débarrasser.

(where en = de mes vieilles
chaussures)

se débarrasser de : to get rid of

I'm going to get rid of them.

(of my old shoes)

Elle ne s'en souvient pas.

(where en = de l'accident)

se souvenir de : to remember

She doesn't remember it.

(the accident)

Il faut en profiter.

(where en = de l'opportunité)

profiter de : to take advantage of

You must take advantage of it.

(of the opportunity)

Je m'en suis servi pour me
défendre.

(where en = du revolver)

se servir de : to use

I used it to defend myself.

(the revolver)

Est-ce que tu vas t'en charger?

(where en = de la situation)

*se charger de : to take
responsibility for*

*Are you going to take
responsibility for it?*

(for the situation)

en

In short, **en** means
whatever it needs to mean
to make sense!