

# Anonymous

## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you use your real name and photo online?
2. Do you leave comments on blogs and news sites? Do you read comments?
3. What is anonymous hate? Have you had any personal experiences of cyberbullying?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can. Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. low-key             | a) mean, distasteful  |
| ___ 2. anonymous           | b) quiet, muted   |
| ___ 3. cyberbully          | c) to take down, to remove access                                   |
| ___ 4. nasty               | d) an image used to represent a person in an online profile         |
| ___ 5. legitimate          | e) being or acting against those in power or authority              |
| ___ 6. avatar              | f) real, valid  |
| ___ 7. lowlife             | g) unidentified, nameless   |
| ___ 8. hacker              | h) a person who attacks another repeatedly in an online space       |
| ___ 9. disable             | i) a person who hacks computers to promote a social cause or reform |
| ___ 10. anti-establishment | j) an uncaring person who acts badly towards humanity               |



## Reading

### ANONYMOUS

*Hater or hacktivist?*

1. Do you use your real name in online spaces? What about your real picture? Some people keep a **low-key** online profile because they don't want marketers, employers, or even parents to track their use or use their personal data. Others choose to remain **anonymous** online because they have been a victim of cyberbullying.
2. **Cyberbullies** themselves almost always operate anonymously. They attack journalists and bloggers and write **nasty** replies to **legitimate** commenters. Cyberbullies often comment about religion, gender, and politics. Nobody knows who is behind the hateful comments because they use cartoon **avatars** and fictional names like I hateUSA2.
3. Rick Mercer is a Canadian TV host who is famous for his 90-second rants. Mercer does not hide behind a mask. In fact, he believes that most anonymous commenters are **lowlifes** who do nothing but spread fear and hate. Mercer wants serious news sites to ban anonymity and stop the online hate.
4. A famous group of **hacktivists** call themselves Anonymous. They **disable** social media accounts of terrorists and defend **anti-establishment** behavior. In 2016, Anonymous released a message on YouTube asking two American gangs to come together to stop the war on the streets. Anonymous has also engaged in cyberattacks on law enforcement agencies and private companies. Some people call these hacktivists freedom fighters and others call them cyberbullies.

*“Cyberbullies can hide behind a mask of anonymity online, and do not need direct physical access to do imaginable harm.”*

—Anna Maria Chavez,  
CEO, Girl Scouts of America

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. In terms of online users, what is the difference between being low-key and being a lowlife?

---

---

---

---

2. What legitimate reason(s) do online users have for operating anonymously?

---

---

---

---

3. Who is Rick Mercer, and what are his beliefs about anonymity and the Internet?

---

---

---

---

4. Why does the reading mention gangs?

---

---

---

---

5. Are the members of Anonymous cyberbullies?

---

---

---

---

## Vocabulary Review

Complete the sentence with a word from the box on the right.  
Each word can only be used once. Compare your answers  
with a partner. Then practice saying the sentences out loud.

1. I write nasty comments on blogs that attack people for their religious beliefs. I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. I am mean to people in general. I steal from them, spread lies about them, and shut doors in their faces. I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. I use my programming skills to shut down the Twitter accounts of terrorists and politicians. I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Anonymous is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ group.  
This group has harassed many law enforcement agencies online.
5. I'm too young to put my profile picture online.  
I use a Disney princess as my \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. I deleted a comment on my blog that asked me what my sexual preference was.  
I only allow comments that are \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. I could not believe the rude response from the anonymous commenter called EyeHateU. It was \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. Do I have to use my real name? I'd rather fill out the survey \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. I receive too much anonymous hate on my blog.  
I am going to \_\_\_\_\_ comments until the cyberbullies leave.
10. I rarely post pictures or information about my personal life online.  
I have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook account.

**Word List:**

- lowlife
- nasty
- cyberbully
- hacktivist
- legitimate
- anonymously
- avatar
- low-key
- disable
- anti-establishment

# Grammar Review

## REFLEXIVE & INTENSIVE PRONOUNS

### A. Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns reflect the subject of the verb. Use these pronouns when the subject and object of the verb are the same person.

**Note:**

Reflexive pronouns are most often found in the object position. They can also appear in an indirect object position, meaning they can follow a preposition.

**Examples**

- Members of Anonymous call *themselves* hacktivists.
- Rick Mercer considers *himself* a comedian.
- I have never thought of *myself* as a victim of cyberbullying.
- You should be ashamed of *yourself* for writing nasty comments on that blog.

Now write your own example using vocabulary from this lesson.

---

---

### B. Intensive Pronouns

Intensive pronouns are reflexive pronouns that are used to emphasize the subject or object noun. They can be removed without any change of meaning.

**Note:**

Intensive pronouns are usually appositive, meaning they follow the subject directly. They can also follow an object.

**Examples**

- Cyberbullies *themselves* usually operate anonymously.
- The victims *themselves* went to the police.
- I do not have a Facebook account *myself*.
- We *ourselves* need to join the fight.

Now write your own example using vocabulary from this lesson.

---

---

## Discussion

1. Should serious news sites allow anonymous comments on their sites and blogs?
2. Is hacktivism a legitimate form of activism?
3. If you were going to give a 90-second rant about a social issue, what would be your topic?
4. Which word best describes your personal involvement in the cyberworld: anonymous, low-key, legitimate, distasteful, anti-establishment, or other? Explain your choice to your classmates.

## Research

### IN SMALL GROUPS

The anti-establishment group Anonymous adopted the Guy Fawkes mask as its icon. On November 5, 2013 (Guy Fawkes Night), the first Million Mask March took place in cities around the world.

1. Do a little research about Guy Fawkes and Guy Fawkes Night.
2. Why do your group members think Anonymous adopted the Guy Fawkes mask?
3. Find out what the Million Mask March is. Would your group members participate? Why or why not?

## Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

### **ANONYMOUS**

*Hater or hacktivist?*

1. Do you use your real name in online spaces? What about your real picture? Some people keep a \_\_\_\_\_ online profile because they don't want marketers, employers, or even parents to track their use or use their personal data. Others choose to remain \_\_\_\_\_ online because they have been a victim of cyberbullying.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ themselves almost always operate anonymously. They attack journalists and bloggers and write \_\_\_\_\_ replies to \_\_\_\_\_ commenters. Cyberbullies often comment about religion, gender, and politics. Nobody knows who is behind the hateful comments because they use cartoon \_\_\_\_\_ and fictional names like IhateUSA2.
3. Rick Mercer is a Canadian TV host who is famous for his 90-second rants. Mercer does not hide behind a mask. In fact, he believes that most anonymous commenters are \_\_\_\_\_ who do nothing but spread fear and hate. Mercer wants serious news sites to ban \_\_\_\_\_ and stop the online hate.
4. A famous group of \_\_\_\_\_ call themselves Anonymous. They \_\_\_\_\_ social media accounts of terrorists and defend \_\_\_\_\_ behavior. In 2016, Anonymous released a message on YouTube asking two American gangs to come together to stop the war on the streets. Anonymous has also engaged in cyberattacks on law \_\_\_\_\_ agencies and private companies. Some people call these hacktivists freedom fighters and others call them cyberbullies.

## Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about the reasons why people choose to remain anonymous on the Internet. They discuss cyberbullying and hacktivism.

**LEVEL:** Int – High Int

**TIME:** 1.5–2 hours

**TAGS:** discussion, anonymous, anonymity, cyberbullying, bullying, Anonymous, politics, terrorism, anti-establishment, antiestablishment, surveillance, journalism, blog, hacking

### Pre-Reading

#### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

#### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. h | 5. f | 7. j | 9. c  |
| 2. g | 4. a | 6. d | 8. i | 10. e |

### Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. Discuss the quote. You may also want to discuss whether or not surveillance is a form of cyberbullying. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 6. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with. Emphasize the different pronunciations of *use* (noun) and *use* (verb) in paragraph 1.

### Comprehension

- An online user who is low-key does not provide a lot of personal information online. An online user who is a lowlife is someone who mistreats other users online (probably a cyberbully).
- Online users may want to remain anonymous to prevent employers or marketers from tracking their behavior. They may also want to protect themselves or their families.

- Rick Mercer is the host of a Canadian TV show who posts 90-second rants on social issues. He thinks that legitimate news sites should ban anonymous comments.
- The reading mention gangs because Anonymous released a public message to ask gangs to band together for the common man. This is an example of how this anti-establishment group is trying to promote a cause.
- Individual answers. Some people consider them cyberbullies, but others call them freedom fighters.

### Vocabulary Review

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. cyberbully         | 6. legitimate  |
| 2. lowlife            | 7. nasty       |
| 3. hacktivist         | 8. anonymously |
| 4. anti-establishment | 9. disable     |
| 5. avatar             | 10. low-key    |

*(continued on the next page...)*



# Answer Key cont.

## Grammar Review

Review our editor's tips for teaching reflexive and intensive pronouns: <https://ellii.com/blog/reflexive-vs-intensive-pronouns>

## Discussion

Answers will vary.

Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

## Research

Optional. Place students in new groups or pairs for this optional activity for higher-level learners. You may want to print pages 1 and 2 of Ellii's Guy Fawkes Night lesson: <https://ellii.com/lessons/holidays-events/1909-guy-fawkes-night>

You could also share this link to an authentic reading: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/anonymous-how-the-guy-fawkes-mask-became-an-icon-of-the-protest-movement-a6720831.html>

## Listening

1. low-key, anonymous
2. Cyberbullies, nasty, legitimate, avatars
3. lowlifes, anonymity
4. hacktivists, disable, anti-establishment, enforcement

### SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Behavior* and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Behaviour* and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.