

Personal pronouns

- mi** = I "the speaker"
- ni** = we "the speaker and one or more other persons"
- vi** = you "the person(s) spoken to"
- li** = he "the male person or person of unknown gender talked about"
- ŝi** = she "female person talked about"
- ĝi** = it "the thing, animal or baby talked about"
- ili** = they "the person, thing or animal talked about"
- oni** = one "unspecified person or persons"
- si** = himself, herself, themselves "the same"

Personal pronouns can take the **accusative ending N**:

Mi amas vin. - I love you.

Ilin konas Karlo. - Karlo knows them.

Ĉu vi ĝin vidas? - Do you see it?

Elizabeto lavas sin en la lago. - Elizabeth washes herself in the lake.

Possessive pronouns

By adding the ending **A** to **personal pronouns** you create **possessive pronouns**:

- mia** my "belonging to me"
- nia** our "belonging to us"
- via** your "belong to you"
- lia** his "belonging to him"
- ŝia** her "belonging to her"
- ĝia** its "belonging to it"
- ilia** their "belonging to them"
- onia** ones "belonging to unspecified persons"
- sia** "belonging to him, her or it, referring to the subject"

The possessive pronouns (also known as possessive adjectives in English) take the endings **J** and **N** just as other **adjectives**: **mia ĉambro** — **miaj ĉambroj** — **mian ĉambrojn** — **miajn ĉambrojn**.

When a possessive pronoun appears before a noun it is a **determiner** so you can't also use **la**. The possessive pronoun informs us about the possessor, and this is enough information to express definiteness. If the possessive pronoun is replaced by a **de**-expression, then one would usually add **la**: **ilia ĉambro = la ĉambro de ili**, **mia edzo = la edzo de mi**.

When a possessive pronoun appears alone without a noun following, it is not a determiner, and does not show definiteness. To show definiteness you normally add **la**:

Tiu ĉi libro estas mia. - This book is mine.

Tiu ĉi libro estas la mia. - This book is mine.

Mia aŭto estas difektita. Ni provu la vian. **La vian = vian aŭton.** - My car is not working. Let's try yours. **La vian = yours, your car.**

But sometimes you can omit this **la** before the possessive pronoun if the context is very clear:

Li pli ŝatas mian domon ol (la) sian. = ...**ol sian domon.** - He like my house better than his own. =than his own house.

Other pronouns

There are other particles which can be pronouns (though not personal pronouns); for example, **the table words in O, U, and ES** and the particle **ambaŭ** (both).

First person

Mi

Mi is singular (and does not indicate gender). **Mi** and **mia** are used by the speaker to talk about himself. In grammar this is often called "the first person":

Mi venas de la avo, kaj **mi** iras nun al la onkio. - I'm coming from my grandfather and I'm going to my uncle.

Mi foriras, sed atendu **min**, ĉar **mi** baldaŭ revenos. - I'm leaving, but wait for me because I will soon return.

Por **miaj** kvar infanoj **mi** aĉetis dek du pomojn. - For my four children I bought twelve apples.

Kiam **mi** finos **mian** laboron, **mi** serĉos **mian** horloĝon. - When I finish my work, I will look for my clock.

Mi prenos **miajn** glitilojn kaj iros **gliti**. - I will take my skates and go skating.

Ni

The pronoun **ni** works just like the English "we". **Ni** is plural (and does not indicate gender). **Ni** and **nia** are used by the speaker to talk about himself and one or more than one other person. **Ni** can mean I and one other person, I and several other people, I and all other people, or you and I. The pronoun **ni** sometimes includes the person spoken to, and sometimes not. Which people are included is shown only by the context:

Ni vidas per la okuloj kaj aŭdas per la oreloj. - We see with our eyes and hear with our ears.

Ni disiĝis kaj iris en diversajn flankojn: **mi** iris dekstren, kaj **li** iris maldekstren. - We parted and went on different sides: I went right, and he went left.

Ni = "I and he".

Kiam **vi** ekparolis, **ni** atendis aŭdi ion novan, sed baldaŭ **ni** vidis, ke **ni** trompiĝis. - When you started to speak we expected to hear something new, but soon saw that we were wrong.

Ni = "I and other people, but not the person spoken to".

La nokto estis tiel malluma, ke **ni** nenion povis vidi eĉ antaŭ **nia** nazo. - The night was so dark that we could see nothing even (if it was) in front of our nose.

La junulo aliĝis al **nia** militistaro kaj kuraĝe batalis kune kun **ni** kontraŭ **niaj** malamikoj. - The youth joined our military and courageously battled together with us against our enemies.

Kiam **vi** vidis **nin** en la salono, **li** jam antaŭe diris al **mi** la veron. - When you saw us in the living room, he had already told me the truth.

Ni = "I and he".

Second person

Vi

Vi (you) and **via** (your) are used by the speaker to talk about the person or people, to whom he speaks. **Vi** and **via** can also include other people who belong to the same group as the one(s) being addressed. In grammar, this is called "the second person". The pronoun **vi** is used equally for one or several people. Therefore, **vi** is sometimes singular, sometimes plural. **Vi** does not show sex, and is also completely neutral on status or position, etc.:

Sinjoro, **vi** estas neĝentila. - Sir, you are not being polite.

Sinjoroj, **vi** estas neĝentilaj. - Gentlemen, you are not polite.

Vi estas infanoj. - You are children.

Ĉu **vi** amas **vian** patron? - Do you love your mother?

Via parolo estas tute nekomprenebla kaj **vijaj** leteroj estas ĉiam skribitaj tute nelegeble. - Your speaking is quite incomprehensible and your letters are always unreadably written.

Sidigu **vin**, sinjoro! - Have a seat, sir!

When **vi** is the subject of a U-verb in the main clause, it is normally left out.

In some languages, a pronoun like **vi** is used to talk about people in general - the English pronoun "you" is frequently used in this way. In Esperanto, the pronoun **oni** is used for this meaning.

Ci

Ci (thou) is a singular pronoun for addressing a person, which doesn't show gender. **Ci** (thou) and **cia** (thine) exist only in theory, and are almost never used in practice. It is possible to imagine **ci** as a purely singular **vi** (you), or as an intimate familiar pronoun (singular) **vi** (you), or even as an insulting (singular) **vi**. But in fact, it's impossible to say what sort of nuance it shows, because it is hardly used. Some people imagine that **ci** was previously used in Esperanto, and that this usage later disappeared, but in fact, **ci** was never really practically used. It only appeared occasionally in experimental use of the language, and so forth. In normal Esperanto, only the word **vi** has been in regular use as a pronoun for addressing others.

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Third person

Everything which is not **mi**, **ni** or **vi** (or **ci**), is called the "third person". The pronouns **li**, **ŝi**, **ĝi** and **ĝia**, and **lia**, **ŝia**, **ĝia**, **ĝia**, are used to talk about something known, which is neither the speaker nor the person spoken to. **Oni** and **onia** are used to talk about people in general. **Si** and **sia** substitute for other third person pronouns on certain occasions.

Li and ŝi

Li and **ŝi** are singular. **Li** and **lia** are used when talking about one male person. **Ŝi** and **ŝia** are used when talking about one female person.

Li estas knabo, kaj ŝi estas knabino. - He is a boy and she is a girl.

Li estas mia onklo. - He is my uncle.

Ŝi estas mia onklino. - She is my aunt.

En la salono estis neniu krom li kaj lia fianĉino. - In the living room there was nobody except for him and his fiancée.

Mi renkontis vian patrino kaj ŝian kolegon. - I met your mother and her colleague.

When talking about a person whose sex is not known, or when speaking generally about a human being of either sex, we normally use **li**. Therefore **li** has two meanings: **male person** or **the human being**:

Ĉiu, kiu ŝin vidis, povis pensi, ke li vidis la patrino. - Everyone who saw her could think that he saw her mother.

Here **li** represents **ĉiu**, so each person.

Se vi iros al kuracisto, li povos helpi vin. - If you go to the doctor, he will be able to help you.

This could be any doctor regardless of sex.

This usage of **li** is regarded by some as sex discrimination, whereas it is really just a point of grammar. We use **li** not because we ignore women, but because **li** has two meanings: masculine, and gender neutral. This can sometimes lead to imprecision. In that case don't hesitate to use a more unambiguous turn of phrase, i.e. **ŝi aŭ li**, **tiu**, **tiu persono** etc.

Note: There has never been a dearth of proposals for new pronouns to replace the gender-neutral **li**. Almost every consonant + "i" has already been proposed with little practical result. But nowadays you may occasionally come across **ŝli** and **ri**, while others insist on **gi** or **ji** or still other variations.

Ĝi

Ĝi (it) is singular. **Ĝi** (it) and **ĝia** (its) are used to talk about something without a gender:

La tranĉilo tranĉas bone, ĉar ĝi estas akra. - The knife slices well because it is sharp.

Trovinte pomon, mi ĝin manĝis. - Having found an apple, I ate it.

Mi disŝiris la leteron kaj disjetis ĝiajn pecetojn en ĉiujn angulojn de la ĉambro. - I tore the letter to pieces and scattered its pieces into all corners of the room.

We also use **ĝi** when talking about a baby so young that its sex is not important. But you can also use **li** as we do for persons whose sex we don't know:

La infano ploras, ĉar ĝi volas manĝi. - The baby is crying because it wants to eat.

Mi montris al la infano, kie kuŝas ĝia pupo. - I showed the child where its doll was lying.

If you specifically want to show the sex of the child, or when talking about an older child, then of course use **li** or **ŝi**.

Ĝi is also used when talking about an animal even when its sex is known:

"Pip, pip!" diris subite malgranda muso, kiu elkuris, kaj post ĝi venis ankoraŭ unu. - "Peep, peep!" said suddenly a small mouse which ran out, and after it ran another one.

Mi frapos vian ĉevalon sur la kapon tiel, ke ĝi falos senviva. - I'll hit your horse on the head so that it will drop dead. (lifeless)

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In special cases when there might be a misunderstanding, one may use **li** or **ŝi** with animals.

Ĝi can also represent a group of words in the singular like: **familio, popolo, armeo** etc.:

Hodiaŭ la problemo interesas la publikon, morgaŭ ĝi povas esti indiferenta pri ĝi. - Today the problem interests the public. Tomorrow it may be indifferent to it.

The first **ĝi** represents the public (several people). (The second **ĝi** is the problem.)

Ĝi normally represent a thing, animal and any other clearly defined matter. **Tio** is used for relating to something abstract, to represent an entire sentence, or for an indefinite matter (= **this matter**):

— **Ŝi forvojaĝis.** — **Jes, mi tion scias.** = **Jes, mi scias, ke ŝi forvojaĝis.** - She went on a trip. — Yes, I know that. = Yes, I know that she went on a trip.

Ili

Ili is plural. **Ili** and **ilia** are used to talk about several known matters or persons (which include neither the speaker nor the person spoken to). **Ili** does not indicate gender.

Kie estas la knaboj? **Ili** estas en la ĝardeno. - Where are the boys? They are in the garden.

Kie estas la knabinoj? **Ili** ankaŭ estas en la ĝardeno. - Where are the girls? They also are in the garden.

Kie estas la tranĉiloj? **Ili** kuŝas sur la tablo. - Where are the knives? They are lying on the table.

Donu al la birdoj akvon, ĉar **ili** volas trinki. - Give the birds water because they want to drink.

Sinjoro Petro kaj lia edzino tre amas miajn infanojn; mi ankaŭ tre amas **iliajn** infanojn. - Mr. Petro and his wife very much love my children; I also very much love their children.

In some languages the pronoun **they** is sometimes used for an undefined group, for people in general. In Esperanto one must use **oni** in that case.

Oni

Oni and **onia** are indefinite pronouns which are used when talking about people in general without mentioning anyone specifically, just like in literary English "one" and "one's". **Oni** is usually singular but can also be plural. **Oni** does not indicate gender:

En malbona vetero **oni** povas facile malvarmumi. - In bad weather one can easily catch cold.

Kiam **oni** estas riĉa (aŭ riĉaj), **oni** havas multajn amikojn. - When one is rich, one has many friends.

Oni diras, ke la vero ĉiam venkas. - It is said, that truth always wins out. (One says that...)

Kun bruo **oni** malfermis la pordegon, kaj la kaleŝo enveturis en la korton. - Noisily the gate was opened and the carriage drove into the courtyard. [Note that we can use {1}oni{2} to avoid a passive construction: was opened = estis malfermita = oni malfermis]

Oni tiel malhelpis al mi, ke mi malbonigis mian tutan laboron. - I was interfered with such that my whole work turned out badly.

La malpura aero malsanigas **onin**. - The dirty air makes one sick.

Kiam oni venas al tiu urbo, **oni** devas atenti pri la krimuloj. Ili kapablas ŝteli eĉ **oniajn** vestaĵojn. - When one comes to this city, one must watch out for criminals. They are capable of stealing even one's clothes.

Ne kritiku **onin**, ĉar **oni** povas ankaŭ vin kritiki. - Don't criticize others, for they may also criticize you.

In practice there are few occasion to use **onin** and **onia**. Because of its rarity some people perceive these forms to be strange and avoid using them, even when they might be useful.

Si

Si and **sia** are special third-person pronouns which at certain times must be used instead of the usual third-person pronouns. **Si** is now singular, now plural depending on what it represents. **Si** in itself does not indicate gender.

Often what is the subject appears again in the sentence in another role. If the subject is **mi, ni** or **vi** (or **ci**), we simply repeat the same pronoun.

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Mi lavas **min**. - I wash myself.
The two **mi** are the same person.

Mi vidas **mian** fraton. - I see my brother.
Mi and **mia** show the same person.

Ni lavas **nin**. - We wash ourselves.
The two **ni** are the same person.

Ni vidas **niajn** fratojn. - We see our brothers.
Ni and **nia** indicate the same person.

Vi lavas **vin**. - You wash yourself.
The two **vi** are the same person(s).

Vi vidas **viajn** fratojn. - You see your brothers.
Vi and **via** indicate the same person(s).

But if the subject is in the third person (neither the speaker nor the person spoken to), one must use **si** for the other role. If, for example, you use **li** both in the subject and the other role, then you are talking strictly about two different men. The same goes for **ŝi**, **ĝi** and **ili**:

Ŝi lavas **ŝin**. - She washes her.
One woman washes another woman.

Ŝi lavas **sin**. - She washes herself.
One woman washes her own body. **Ŝi** and **sin** indicate the same person.

Ŝi vidas **ŝian** patrinon. - She sees her mother.
One woman sees the mother of another woman.

Ŝi vidas **sian** patrinon. - She sees her mother.
One woman sees her own mother.

La virino serĉas **ŝian** filon. - The woman is looking for her son.
The woman is looking for another woman's son.

La virino serĉas **sian** filon. - The woman is looking for her son.
The woman is looking for her own son.

Li lavas **lin**. - He washes him.
One man washes another man.

Li lavas **sin**. - He washes himself.
One man washes his own body. **Li** and **sin** indicate the same person.

Ĝi lavas **ĝin**. - It washes it.
One animal washes another animal (or thing).

Ĝi lavas **sin**. - It washes itself.
One animal washes its own body. **Ĝi** and **sin** indicate the same animal.

La hundo ludas per **sia** pilko. - The dog plays with his ball.
The dog plays with the ball belonging to him.

Ili lavas **ilin**. - They wash them.
One group of people or animals washes another group.

Ili lavas **sin**. - They wash themselves.

Ili lavas ilin. - They wash them.

One group of people or animals washes another group.

Ili lavas sin. - They wash themselves.

One group washes their own bodies. **Ili** and **sin** indicate the same group.

La naĝintoj ne trovas siajn vestaĵojn. - The swimmers don't find their clothes.

The swimmers don't find their own clothes.

Oni ne forgesas facile sian unuan amon. - One doesn't easily forgets one's first love.

Si cannot be the subject

Si can never itself be the subject or part of the subject, because then **si** would represent itself. In the same way **sia** cannot be part of the subject. It is not possible to say: **Si manĝas. Mi kaj si dancas. Petro kaj si fiŝkaptas. Mia kaj sia fratoj estas samklasanoj. Sia edzino estas kisata de li.** Don't say: **Karlo kaj sia frato promenas en la parko.** If one were to utter that sentence one would probably intend for **sia** to represent Karlo, but the subject is not Karlo, but **Karlo kaj sia frato**. Say: **Karlo kaj lia frato promenas en la parko.** However one can use **si** by changing the sentence to this: **Karlo kun sia frato promenas en la parko.** Now the subject is Karlo, and **sia** correctly represents Karlo. The phrase **kun sia frato** [with his brother] is not part of the subject but a **kun**-adjekt.

Si in a passive sentence

Si and **sia** represents the **grammatical** subject. This also holds true for **passive sentences**, although the grammatical subject is not the agent in that type of sentence:

Ŝi estas amata de siaj instruistinoj. - She is loved by her teachers.

Karlo estis akompanata de Petro al sia domo. = ...al la domo de Karlo. - Karlo was accompanied by Peter to his house. =...to Karlo's house.

Karlo estis akompanata de Petro al lia domo. = ...al la domo de Petro. - Karlo was accompanied by Peter to HIS house. = to Peter's house.

Li sendas leteron al sia kuzo. → **Letero estas sendata de li al lia (propra) kuzo.** - He sends a letter to his cousin. → A letter is sent by him to his (own) cousin.

In a passive sentence you can't say **al sia kuzo**, because then we would be referring to the cousin of the letter.

Subclause

The predicate of a **subclause** has its own subject. If you use **si(a)** in a subclause it always represent the subject of the subclause, never the subject of the main clause:

Elizabeto rigardis la viron, kiu kombis al si la harojn. - Elizabeth looked at the man who combed his hair.

The man combed his own hair (not that of Elizabeth). **Si** represents the subject of **kombis**, namely **kiu** (and **kiu** represents the man).

Karlo kaj Petro diris, ke la infanoj jam vestis sin. - Karlo and Peter said that the children already dressed themselves.

The children dressed themselves (they didn't dress Karlo kaj Peter).

Li vidis, ke la hundo ludas per sia pilko. - He saw that the dog was playing with his ball.

The ball belongs to the dog (the subject of the subclause).

Abimeleĥ, la reĝo de la Filiŝtoj, rigardis tra la fenestro, kaj vidis, ke Isaak amuziĝas kun sia edzino Rebeka. - Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out the window and saw that Isaac was amusing himself with his wife Rebecca.

Rebecca is the wife of Isaac (the subject of **amuziĝas**, not of Abimelech (the subject of **vidis**, If she were the wife of Abimelech, one would say **lia edzino**).

Mia avo diris, ke li tre amis sian patrinojn. - My grandfather said that he had loved his mother very much.

Sian represents the subject of **amis**, while **li** can refer to **mia avo**, but could also refer to another man.

Si can not itself be the subject. It is also not possible to use **si** as the subject of a subclause, or part of the subject of a subclause with the aim of making **si** represent the subject of the main clause. You can't say: **Karlo diris, ke si venos morgaŭ.** Neither: **Karlo diris, ke sia frato venos morgaŭ.** **Si** in a subclause always represents the subject of the subclause itself. One must say: **Karlo diris, ke li venos...** / **ke lia frato venos...** You also can't say: **Ŝi sentis, ke pluvas sur sin.** You must say: **Ŝi sentis, ke pluvas sur ĝin.**

A **Participle with an A-ending** is like a subclause:

Li ekvidis la anĝelon de la Eternulo, starantan sur la vojo kun elingigita glavo en sia mano. - He suddenly saw the angel of the Lord standing on the road with a drawn sword in his hand.

The angel was standing with a sword in his hand.

Karlo promenis kun virino vestita per sia plej belaj vestoj. - Karlo took a walk with a woman dressed in her most beautiful clothes.

Karlo promenis kun virino vestita per sia plej bela vesto. - Karlo took a walk with a woman dressed in her most beautiful clothes.
She was dressed in her most beautiful clothes.

Also expression of comparison introduced by kiel or ol act like subclauses. Si in this comparative expression represents the subject of the implied verb:

Ŝi amas lin kiel sin mem. - She loves him as herself.

She loves him as she loves herself.

Ŝi estas tiel saĝa kiel ŝia fratino. - She is as wise as her sister.

Her sister is also wise.

Li punis ilin same kiel siajn fratojn. - He punished them just like his brothers.

He also punished his brothers.

Ŝi amas lin pli ol sin mem. - She loves him more than herself.

She loves him more than she loves herself.

Li estas pli aĝa ol lia frato. - He is older than his brother.

His brother is old but less so.

A complex postfixed epithet or complement of a noun can be regarded as a subclause with an implied verb. Then si can represent the subject of the implied verb. This subject is always identical to the previous noun. With these types of sentences, however, there is no conformity in usage:

Ili vizitis muzeon faman pro siaj belaj pentraĵoj. = ...muzeon, kiu estas fama pro siaj belaj pentraĵoj. - They visited a museum famous for its beautiful paintings. = ...a museum which is famous for its beautiful paintings.

The paintings belong to the museum.

Picasso vizitis muzeon faman pro liaj pentraĵoj. = ...muzeon, kiu estas fama pro liaj pentraĵoj. - Picasso visited a museum famous for his paintings. = ...a museum which is famous for his paintings.

The paintings are by Picasso.

Ŝi vidis soldaton kun sia pafilo en la mano. = ...soldaton, kiu staris kun sia pafilo en la mano. - She saw a soldier with his gun in his hand. = ...a soldier who stood with his gun in his hand.

Infinitive

When si is used together with a verb in the infinitive, then si represents the implied subject of the infinitive. In most cases this implied subject is the same as the subject of the predicate, but not always:

Ĉiu homo devas zorgi pri si mem. - Every person must look after himself.

Si represents the subject of zorgi. It is identical to the subject of devas.

La sinjoro ordonis al la servisto vesti sin. - The master order the servant to dress himself.

The implied subject of vesti is la servisto. Sin represents the servant.

La sinjoro ordonis al la servisto vesti lin. - The master ordered the servant to dress him.

The servant should not dress himself but another man, most likely the master.

If the implied subject of the infinitive is not present in the sentence, and if it's not important, then normally si will stand for the subject of the predicate.

La reĝo sendis voki sian kuraciston. - The king sent for his doctor. [sent to have his doctor called]

The implied subject of voki is not present in the sentence and is not important. Sia, therefore, can represent the king. The expression sendis voki is treated as one verb with only one subject, the king.

La reĝo sendis la serviston voki lian kuraciston. - The king sent the servant to call his doctor.

Here the subject of voki (la servisto) is present. If one were to say sian kuraciston, then the servant would have to call his own doctor, not the king's doctor.

Action nouns

If a noun is clearly related to an action, and if the subject of that action is present si should normally represent that subject. However, the rules are not fixed:

Petro pacience aŭskultis la plendadon de Karlo pri ĉiuj siaj problemoj. - Peter patiently listened to Karlo complaining about all his problems.

Karlo complained about all his problems. The problems are Karlo's (the implied subject of plendado), and not Peter's (the subject of

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The implied subject of **voki** is not present in the sentence and is not important. **Sia**, therefore, can represent the king. The expression **sendis voki** is treated as one verb with only one subject, the king.

La reĝo sendis la serviston voki lian kuraciston. - The king sent the servant to call his doctor.

Here the subject of **voki** (la servisto) is present. If one were to say **sian kuraciston**, then the servant would have to call his own doctor, not the king's doctor.

Action nouns

If a noun is clearly related to an action, and if the subject of that action is present **si** should normally represent that subject. However, the rules are not fixed:

Petro pacience aŭskultis la plendadon de Karlo pri ĉiuj siaj problemoj. - Peter patiently listened to Karlo complaining about all his problems.

Karlo complained about all his problems. The problems are Karlo's (the implied subject of **plendado**), and not Peter's (the subject of **aŭskultis**).

When **sia** is put before a noun of action, in order to define the action, it always represents the subject of the predicate:

Karlo rakontis al Eva pri sia vojaĝo al Azio. - Karlo told Eva about his trip to Asia.

Karlo travelled to Asia.

Karlo demandis al Eva pri ŝia vojaĝo al Eŭropo. - Karlo asked Eva about her trip to Europe.

Eva travelled to Europe.

Si(a) in fixed expressions

In some fixed expressions **si(a)** does not obey the normal rules:

siatempe = "at the time, at that time, at the time in question, at a convenient time". When **siatempe** has this special meaning, then we always say **siatempe** regardless of the subject: **Mi volis siatempe proponi regulon.** I wanted at the time to propose a rule. **Tiam mi donos al via lando pluvon siatempe.** Then I will give your land rain in good time.

Noun + en si = "in itself; such as it is". When expressing this special meaning we use **si** even if the matter concerned is not the subject: **Se oni rigardas la aferon en si, oni vidas...** If one looks at the matter in itself, one sees... = **Se oni rigardas la aferon tia, kia ĝi estas...** If one looks at the matter such as it is...