

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- ❖ A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, gender, and person. An **antecedent** is the noun or pronoun that a pronoun refers to or replaces.

Agreement in Number

- ❖ If the antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun. If it is plural, use a plural pronoun.

Because this dollhouse is almost 300 years old, it is historically important.

The furnishings are noticeably different from their modern counterparts.

- ❖ **Compound Subjects** – A plural pronoun is used to refer to nouns or pronouns joined by and.

The tiny chest and dresser still have their original hardware.

- ❖ A pronoun that refers to nouns or pronouns joined by or or nor should agree with the noun or pronoun nearest to it.

Neither the **astronauts** nor NASA neglected its duties.

Neither **NASA** nor the astronauts neglected their duties.

- ❖ **With Collective Nouns** – A collective noun such as class, crew, team, audience, or family may be referred to by either a singular or a plural pronoun, depending upon the meaning of the noun in the sentence.

- A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be singular if the collective noun names a group acting as a unit.

The family that owns the house loaned its treasure to the library.

(singular - The family is acting as a single unit)

- A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be plural if the collective noun names the members or parts of a group acting individually.

The family wanted their friends to see the house.

(plural - The family members are acting individually)

- ❖ **Gender and Person** – The **gender** of the pronoun – masculine (*he, his, him*), feminine (*she, her, hers*) or neuter (*it, its*) – must be the same as the gender of its antecedent. The **person** (*first, second, third*) of the pronoun also must agree with the person of its antecedent.

You would be proud to see your work appreciated by future generations.

Any artist would like his or her creation to last for hundreds of years.

An astronaut conducts his or her experiments during the flight.

Tip: You can often avoid the awkward “he or she” construction by making both the pronoun and its antecedent plural. Notice that you may also need to change the verb to a plural form.

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EXERCISE 11: Identifying Pronouns and Their Antecedents

Directions: In each sentence underline once the personal pronoun and underline twice its antecedent.

- 1) As a child, Aunt Livia often played with her dollhouse.
- 2) In the 1500s, dollhouse owners used the dollhouses to show off their wealth.
- 3) The dollhouses were made to imitate their owners’ homes.
- 4) In one place, a rich woman could show visitors how beautifully her whole house was decorated.
- 5) The man of the house could give guests an idea of treasures he kept in storage.
- 6) These houses were not small; some of them were six feet high.
- 7) Dutch merchants made their dollhouses much smaller.
- 8) The Utrecht Dollhouse, one of the most famous of its kind, consists of a cabinet with tiny furnished rooms instead of drawers or shelves.
- 9) Craftspeople of the late 1600s gave their talents to creating the Utrecht Dollhouse.
- 10) Anyone thinking that dollhouses are only for children should revise his or her belief.
- 11) Dollhouses of the 1500s and 1600s, miniature copies of their wealthy owners’ homes, can help a researcher improve his or her understanding of those times.

- 12) In the 1920s, a society woman created a dollhouse, and Carrie Stettheimer's artist friends contributed their talents to making it special.
- 13) Among those friends was the painter Marcel Duchamp, best known for his pioneering the artistic movement called Dada.
- 14) Duchamp contributed to the Stettheimer dollhouse a tiny work painted by him.

EXERCISE 12: Making Pronouns and Antecedents Agree

Directions: Circle the pronoun that correctly completes each sentence. Also, underline the antecedent(s) of the pronoun.

- 1) When the team scored a touchdown, the crowd threw (its, their) hats in the air.
- 2) Neither Carmen nor her sisters have bought a gift for (her, their) brother.
- 3) Scuba divers are taught that (you, they) should check (your, their) equipment.
- 4) Patrick and Warren will present (his, their) routine before the other gymnasts do.
- 5) Not one hiker would set out without (his or her, their) compass.
- 6) Sal and Marcus shop for clothes here because (you, they) can find good bargains.
- 7) Either Debbie or Melinda will bring (her, their) ice skates.
- 8) Anyone who wants a job should bring (his or her, their) application to me.
- 9) Arctic explorers discover that (you, they) cannot expose skin to the icy air.
- 10) I told everyone in the boys' choir that (you, he) had to bring a boxed lunch.
- 11) Neither Carl nor Mark asked (his, their) parents to chaperone the dance.
- 12) The town council will be presenting (its, their) own proposal for the new park.
- 13) Fran always liked walking home because (you, she) saved money on bus fare.
- 14) If (you, they) should fall, experienced in-line skaters know that knee and elbow pads will reduce the risk of injury.
- 15) Neither Kate nor Anne has had (her, their) vacation pictures developed yet.

EXERCISE 13: Making Pronouns and Antecedents Agree in Writing

Directions: Read the following paragraph. Look especially for errors in agreement between pronouns and their antecedents. When you find a pronoun error, cross out the incorrect pronoun and write the correct one above it. There will not be a mistake in every sentence.

(1) Kathy has always liked dollhouses, and she got an idea for a business from their hobby. (2) Now she and her brothers make dollhouses for sale. (3) Neither she nor her brothers give all of her time to the business. (4) Still, the team makes all its spending money from their sales. (5) Kathy's older and assembles the pieces. (6) He chooses the plywood, cuts it to scale, and assembles the pieces. (7) Her younger brother, Max, paints the houses inside and out, giving it details like doors, windows, and shutters. (8) While Murray and Max do his jobs, Kathy buys miniature furniture. (9) Then she sews curtains, rugs, tablecloths, and bedspreads to make each house special. (10) From October until mid-December, the crew takes turns selling its products at craft sales.

❖ Indefinite Pronouns as Antecedents

- When an indefinite pronoun is the antecedent of a personal pronoun, the personal pronoun must agree in number with the indefinite pronoun. This chart shows the number of some common indefinite pronouns.

Indefinite Pronouns		
Always Singular	Always Plural	Singular or Plural
Another each everything one	both	all none
Anybody either neither somebody	few	any some
Anyone everybody nobody someone	many	most
Anything everyone no one	several	

Use a singular pronoun to refer to a singular indefinite pronoun. The phrase “his or her” is considered a singular pronoun.

Each of the cars has its sponsor's name painted on it. (singular)

Use a plural pronoun to refer to a plural indefinite pronoun.

Many of the cars are in their first race. (plural)

Some indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural. Use the meaning of the sentence to determine whether the indefinite pronoun is singular or plural.

Some of the equipment was still packed in its containers. (singular)

Some of the race teams were still looking for their equipment. (plural)

EXERCISE 14: Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

Directions: In each sentence, circle the correct pronoun. Also underline its antecedent. If its antecedent is a pronoun that can be either singular or plural, underline twice the word that indicates its number in the sentence.

- 1) All of the mineral water has lost (its, their) sparkle.
- 2) Everyone must bring (his or her, their) own instrument to the music class.
- 3) Last spring one of the baby robins fell and broke (its, their) wings.
- 4) Nobody appreciates (his or her, their) own good health until illness strikes.
- 5) None of the books are in (its, their) proper position on the shelves.
- 6) Each of the boys enjoyed (his, their) trip to the Art Institute.
- 7) Both of the girls had to take medication for (her, their) allergies.
- 8) Each of the exhibits at the museum required (its, their) own special lighting.
- 9) One of the brochures has a photograph of Barcelona on (its, their) cover.
- 10) Few of the members on the girls' team had arranged (her, their) own transportation.
- 11) Everything in the jewelry case has (its, their) own price tag.
- 12) None of the new dimes have been removed from (its, their) wrappers.
- 13) Either of those girls may be invited to display (her, their) paintings at the fair.
- 14) Each of the baby girls has already received (her, their) vaccinations.
- 15) Neither of those dogs ever learned to obey (its, their) master.
- 16) During the violent thunderstorm, most of the county lost (its, their) electricity.
- 17) All but one of the alligators that escaped from the zoo found (its, their) way back safely.
- 18) Each of the boys on the team is wearing (his, their) new uniform.
- 19) Many have expressed (his or her, their) support for our plan.
- 20) Neither of the women has told me (her, their) opinion.
- 21) Everyone in the gardens planted (his or her, their) tomatoes just before the unexpected frost.
- 22) None of the women skaters has taken (her, their) turn on the ice yet.

23) Most of the bus drivers had completed (his or her, their) routes by midnight.

24) Some of the flowers have lost (its, their) fragrance.

25) Several of the men insist that (his, their) votes were not counted.

EXERCISE 15: Proofreading for Pronoun/Antecedent Errors

Directions: Proofread the following paragraph. When you find an error involving a pronoun and its agreement with its antecedent, cross the pronoun out. Then write the correct pronoun or pronouns above it. If necessary, mark any verb that must agree with the changed pronoun to be changed, also.

One of the most popular sports worldwide holds their events in stadiums, on city streets, and on mountain roads. That sport is auto racing. Many of the drivers are professionals who earn his or her living from competing. Tens of thousands more, however, are amateurs who participate at their own expense. There are many kinds of auto races, and almost anyone can test their abilities in one of them. For example, some of the drivers in kart races have only celebrated his or her eighth birthday. However, most of the people interested in racing get their pleasure from watching others race. Almost everybody in the United States has heard of drag racing, even if they haven't seen it. Several of the other well known races are known by its French name, *Grand Prix*, which means "large prize." All of these races draw hundreds of thousands of spectators to its course on roads in Canada, the United States, Monaco, and other countries.