

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun takes the place of a noun. The antecedent is the word the pronoun refers to or replaces. In a sentence, the antecedent comes before the pronoun and must match in person, number, and gender.

Singular Nouns: Ex: Bob ate his lunch at work.

Two singular objects connected by “and” are considered plural.

Ex: Julie and Mike picked their part in the play.

Two singular objects connected by “or” are considered singular

Ex: Gloria or Lisa has promised to lend me her book.

Plural Words: such as both, several, and many are plural and require plural pronouns.

Ex: Several donated their books back to the school.

Singular Subjects: words that are always singular must have singular pronouns when used as subjects: each, everybody, nobody, nothing, every, everything, somebody, either, everyone, anybody, someone, neither.

Ex: Everybody is wearing his or her jersey to the game. (use his or her if the gender is not known)

Prepositional Phrases: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent, not with the object of a prepositional phrase.

Ex: One (of the boys) lost his bike.

Company Names: always require singular pronouns.

Ex: Walmart’s will soon have all its spring clothes on sale.

One Plural and One Singular Subject: When a compound subject joined by “or” or “nor” contains one singular and one plural subject, the pronoun agrees with the closer word.

Ex: Neither the dog nor the cats lost their collar.

Ex: Either the girls or Mrs. Smith will give her presentation first.

Collective Nouns: such as army, class, and family take different pronouns, depending on their use as singular or plural nouns.

Ex: The band played its hardest piece. (the band is one unit and considered singular)

Ex: The band wore their uniforms to the game. (the band is made up of individuals who wear uniforms, so in this case, band is plural, implying the members of the band)