

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement B

8r. Use a singular pronoun to refer to two or more singular antecedents joined by or or nor.

EXAMPLE Neither Ramona nor Gloria could find her library card.

8s. Use a plural pronoun to refer to two or more antecedents joined by and.

EXAMPLE Vincent and Jules have learned all of their lines in the play.

EXERCISE A On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with the antecedent or antecedents. Then, circle each antecedent.

Example 1. Every Sunday (Maggie) and (Roger) watched their favorite television show.

- When we're playing tennis, my (brother) and (I) never let the other players intimidate us.
- (Either) (Jason) or (Raul) will bring his tool kit to the bicycle race.
- (Brenda) and (Caitlin) told us that they didn't plan to come to the party.
- If either (Brittany) or (Celine) wants to be a successful writer, she will need to work hard.
- (Leora) and (Annette) pooled their resources to buy a birthday present for Jim.
- Please ask (Glendon) and (Maria) if their science fair project is ready yet.
- Did (Lauryl) or (Marian) say if she was going to the mock trial?
- (Karen) and (I) discussed our difference of opinion quite calmly.
- (Frank) and (Tina) would like the class to help them set up their display.
- Let (Kathryn) and (Michael) know in advance if they should bring a dish to the party.

EXERCISE B Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Cross out the error, and write the correct pronoun above it. Then, circle each antecedent.

Example 1. Either (Denzel) or (Malcolm) will bring ^{his} ~~their~~ soccer ball to the game.

- (Julio) and (Spike) have brought all of ^{their} ~~his~~ CDs to the dance.
- Neither (Faith) nor (Deanna) knew where ^{her} ~~their~~ bicycle was.
- Is (Melissa) or (Martina) sure ^{she} ~~they~~ won't join us?
- Let's ask (Antonia) and (Belle) if ^{she} ~~she~~ read the article about comets.
- Does (Dutch) or (Pike) have ^{his} ~~their~~ notebook with him?

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Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement C

8t. Some indefinite pronouns are plural, some are singular, and some may be either.

(1) Use a singular pronoun to refer to *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

EXAMPLES Each of the boys likes his new uniform.
Has everybody in the club paid his or her dues?

(2) The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

EXAMPLE Few of the explorers became lost on their way out of the cave.

(3) The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

EXAMPLES Most of the forest has already been cut down, hasn't it? [*Most* refers to the singular noun *forest*.]
Most of the trees have already been cut down, haven't they? [*Most* refers to the plural noun *trees*.]

EXERCISE Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Draw a line through each incorrect pronoun, and write the correct form above it. Then, circle the antecedent.

Example 1. Each of the cats has ^{its} ~~their~~ own special hiding place.

- Some of the CDs have lost ^{their} ~~its~~ jewel cases.
- Few of the women's soccer team enjoyed ^{their} ~~her~~ stay in Helsinki.
- Either of the brothers is willing to bring ^{his} ~~their~~ baseball glove to the game.
- Hasn't anybody announced ^{his/her} ~~their~~ intentions yet?
- Many of the reporters do ^{their} ~~his or her~~ own research.
- All of the rosebushes in the garden have thorns on ^{them} ~~it~~.
- Everyone in the class is aware of ^{his/her} ~~their~~ responsibility to bring a note from home.
- Someone on the swimming team left ^{his/her} ~~their~~ goggles by the side of the pool.
- Several of the boys joined the military after ^{they} ~~he~~ graduated from high school.
- Some of the people in the audience got the joke, and ^{they} ~~it~~ laughed heartily.

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Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement D

Answer Key

8t. Some indefinite pronouns are plural, some are singular, and some may be either.

(1) Use a singular pronoun to refer to *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

EXAMPLES Has **anyone** lost **his or her** keys?

Each of the recipes calls for wheat as **its** main ingredient.

(2) The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

EXAMPLE **Several** of the teachers ordered **their** textbooks early.

(3) The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

EXAMPLES **All** of the money retained **its** value. [*All* refers to the singular noun *money*.]

All of the vases retained **their** value. [*All* refers to the plural noun *vases*.]

EXERCISE On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with its antecedent. Then, circle the antecedent.

Example 1. Several of the houses lost their roofs during the storm.

1. Each of my sisters has her own pogo stick.

2. None of the employees should reveal their password to anyone.

3. Everything the teacher said made sense the moment he said it.

4. Both of the astronomical calendars have the same nebula on their covers.

5. Several of the police officers spent their holidays volunteering at the new community center.

6. If you have anything to say during the debate, please say it as succinctly as possible.

7. Neither of my grandmothers has ever revealed her secret for making jambalaya.

8. More of the palm trees have been planted this year because they look so striking along the beach.

9. One of the male interns put his clipboard down to pick up the baby.

10. Most of the radio program was written by Marta, but a few minutes of it were written by Tish.

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Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement E

8u.

Either a singular or a plural pronoun may be used to refer to a collective noun, depending on the meaning of the sentence.

A collective noun is singular when it refers to the group as a unit and plural when it refers to the individual parts or members of the group.

SINGULAR The **band** made **its** debut in November 1999.

PLURAL The **band** happily signed autographs for **their** fans.

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, circle the antecedent for the pronouns in parentheses. Then, underline the pronoun that agrees with the antecedent.

Example 1. After hearing all the evidence, the jury made (its, their) decision quickly.

- The thundering herd left a wide swath of flattened grass in (its, their) wake.
- As the team entered the lobby, the fans began to ask for (its, their) autographs.
- After debating all of (its, their) options, the commission issued its report.
- The readership of the newspaper were not shy about making (its, their) opinions known.
- The jury could not agree among (itself, themselves) what to order for lunch.
- During the intermission, the ensemble tuned (its, their) instruments.
- The majority of the class took (its, their) work home last night.
- The Fantasy Society voted *The Lord of the Rings* (its, their) choice for Book of the Century.
- The cast of the play took (its, their) curtain calls one at a time.
- The crowd voted with (its, their) feet and left the debate early.

EXERCISE B On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with its antecedent. Then, circle the antecedent.

Example 1. The class agreed to hold _____ its _____ annual party next month.

- The troupe of actors looked good in their costumes.
- The entire staff lined up in the parking lot to have its picture taken.
- The committee cannot even agree among themselves.
- After a fierce battle, the platoon took its position at the top of the ridge.
- After winning, the team posed for photographs with their/its ecstatic fans.

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Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement F

- 8v.** An expression of an amount may take a singular or plural pronoun, depending on how the expression is used.

SINGULAR I paid **twenty dollars** for these skates. I thought **it** was a reasonable price.

PLURAL I have **twenty dollars**, but one of **them** has been torn in half.

- 8w.** Some nouns that are plural in form take singular pronouns.

SINGULAR I have good **news**. Would you like to hear **it**?

PLURAL Where are the **scissors**? Oh, here **they** are.

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, circle the antecedent for the pronouns in parentheses. Then, underline the pronoun in parentheses that agrees with the antecedent.

Example 1. Jerrold enjoyed studying genetics because (it, they) combined biology and chemistry.

- If I make fifty dollars from the carwash this weekend, I can use (it, them) to put a down payment on a bicycle.
- After Luther oiled the shears, (it, they) were ready to use again.
- Michiko poured the molasses and watched (it, them) cover the bottom of the pan.
- Now that you've heard the news do you think (it, they) will affect how you vote?
- If you want to go to the Olympics, you have to train for (it, them).
- Sue had three dollars in her wallet, but now one of (it, them) is missing.
- Vera dropped the pliers in the grass and then spent an hour looking for (it, them).
- Mathematics was more than an interest for Leora; (it, they) became a passion.
- Roxanne decided not to wear her shorts because (it, they) had become threadbare.
- He had only seventy-five cents; would (it, they) be enough to pay for the juice?

EXERCISE B Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Cross out each incorrectly used pronoun, and write the correct pronoun above it. Then, circle the antecedent.

Example 1. Please put the scissors back when you are finished with ~~it~~.^{them}

- Francesca decided to take civics because she could fit ~~them~~^{it} into her schedule.
- Malik has lost his eyeglasses; he needs ~~it~~^{them} for basketball.
- Take the binoculars out of ~~its~~^{their} case, please.
- Did you hear the news? Could ~~they~~^{it} be any worse?
- Of all the pants you could have worn, ~~that~~^{those} could be the worst.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement G

- 8x.** Use a singular pronoun to refer to the title of a creative work (such as a book, song, movie, or painting).

EXAMPLE Have you read "**The Bells**" by E. A. Poe? **It** is one of my favorite poems to read aloud.

- 8y.** Use a singular pronoun to refer to the name of a country, city, or organization.

EXAMPLE **Calloway Motors** will have **its** grand opening on Saturday.

EXERCISE Most of the following sentences contain an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Draw a line through each incorrectly used pronoun, and write the correct pronoun above it. If a sentence is already correct, write C next to the sentence number.

Example 1. Hartwig Interiors is redesigning ~~their~~^{its} own showroom.

1. Discount Appliances used to be located on Burnet Avenue; ~~they~~^{it} stood where a beautiful orchard used to grow.

- C 2. *The Cowboys* is one of my dad's favorite movies, and he has seen it several times.

3. After Tranh was assigned to read *Great Expectations*, the Charles Dickens masterpiece, he managed to finish ~~them~~^{it} over the weekend.

- C 4. The Netherlands is also known as Holland, and its citizens are known as the Dutch.

5. The Sons of the Desert, devoted to the comic films of Laurel and Hardy, was founded in 1964, and my grandfather has been a member of ~~them~~^{it} since 1967.

6. After I read "Flowers for Algernon," I found out that Hollywood has adapted ~~them~~^{it} for the movies twice.

7. As you read T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men," consider the effect of ~~them~~^{it} on your imagination.

8. Jacques Offenbach never completed his opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*; Ernest Guiraud finished ~~them~~^{it} after Offenbach's death.

9. When you come to the Narrows, where so many ships have gone down, go around ~~them~~^{it}.

- C 10. Several of my uncles are members of the Knights of Columbus; my father has also been a member of it.