

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement A

A pronoun usually refers to a noun or another pronoun called its *antecedent*.

8q. A pronoun should agree in number and gender with its antecedent.

EXAMPLES Alicia left **her** book bag on the school bus.
 Many people like the **movie** because of **its** special effects.
 The **musicians** are practicing for **their** spring concert.
 Not every **student** has returned **his or her** permission slip for the field trip.

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

Example 1. (Paul) loaned Nell _____ *his* _____ jacket.

- Mary Ellen took _____ dog for a walk after dinner.
- One of the men bent to pick up _____ tools.
- Somebody left _____ books on the lawn last night.
- Sean said that _____ was too tired to come with us to the movies.
- Out of sheer boredom, the cat chased _____ own tail.
- Stanley went up to _____ room to do the homework assignment.
- Miranda hung the diploma on the wall of _____ bedroom.
- Each of the girls on the soccer team received _____ own jersey yesterday.
- As the sun set, the mountain cast _____ shadow across the desert.
- Pick up the frying pan and bring _____ to me, please.
- We stayed awake to watch the film until _____ was over.
- If your sister gets here after I leave, tell _____ I left a casserole in the fridge.
- Neither of the boys remembered where _____ baseball glove was.
- That afternoon Uncle Oliver told us stories about _____ experiences in Vietnam.
- Either of the men is willing to tell you what _____ saw at the accident scene.
- Emily Dickinson often gave _____ poems away as gifts to neighbors.
- Everybody at the office put flowers in _____ cubicle.
- The author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* changed _____ name from Samuel Clemens to Mark Twain.
- Each of the nuns lifted _____ hand to make the sign of the cross.
- Someone hung _____ wet towel over the shower curtain.

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 _____.
- Either Jason or Raul will bring _____ tool kit to the bicycle race.
- Brenda and Caitlin told us that _____ didn't plan to come to the party.
- If either Brittany or Celine wants to be a successful writer, _____ will need to work hard.
- Leora and Annette pooled _____ resources to buy a birthday present for Jim.
- Please ask Glendon and Maria if _____ science fair project is ready yet.
- Did Lauryn or Marian say if _____ was going to the mock trial?
- Karen and I discussed _____ difference of opinion quite calmly.
- Frank and Tina would like the class to help _____ set up their display.
- Let Kathryn and Michael know in advance if _____ 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 his CDs to the dance.
- Neither Faith nor Deanna knew where their bicycle was.
- Is Melissa or Martina sure they won't join us?
- Let's ask Antonia and Belle if she read the article about comets.
- Does Dutch or Pike have 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 its jewel cases.
- Few of the women's soccer team enjoyed her stay in Helsinki.
- Either of the brothers is willing to bring their baseball glove to the game.
- Hasn't anybody announced their intentions yet?
- Many of the reporters do his or her own research.
- All of the rosebushes in the garden have thorns on it.
- Everyone in the class is aware of their responsibility to bring a note from home.
- Someone on the swimming team left their goggles by the side of the pool.
- Several of the boys joined the military after he graduated from high school.
- Some of the people in the audience got the joke, and it laughed heartily.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement D

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.

- Each of my sisters has _____ own pogo stick.
- None of the employees should reveal _____ password to anyone.
- Everything the teacher said made sense the moment he said _____.
- Both of the astronomical calendars have the same nebula on _____ covers.
- Several of the police officers spent _____ holidays volunteering at the new community center.
- If you have anything to say during the debate, please say _____ as succinctly as possible.
- Neither of my grandmothers has ever revealed _____ secret for making jambalaya.
- More of the palm trees have been planted this year because _____ look so striking along the beach.
- One of the male interns put _____ clipboard down to pick up the baby.
- Most of the radio program was written by Marta, but a few minutes of _____ 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 _____ costumes.
- The entire staff lined up in the parking lot to have _____ picture taken.
- The committee cannot even agree among _____.
- After a fierce battle, the platoon took _____ position at the top of the ridge.
- After winning, the team posed for photographs with _____ ecstatic fans.

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 into her schedule.
- Malik has lost his eyeglasses; he needs it for basketball.
- Take the binoculars out of its case, please.
- Did you hear the news? Could they be any worse?
- Of all the pants you could have worn, that could be the worst.