

The Pronoun

2h. A *pronoun* is a word used in place of one or more nouns or pronouns.

Writers and speakers often use pronouns to avoid repeating a name or a word.

EXAMPLES Will Kendra walk Kendra's dog this afternoon? [Repeating the name *Kendra* sounds awkward.]

Will Kendra walk her dog this afternoon? [The pronoun *her* replaces *Kendra's*.]

The twins congratulated the twins because the twins' basketball team won the championship. [Repeating the word *twins* sounds awkward.]

The twins congratulated themselves because their basketball team won the championship. [The pronouns *their* and *themselves* replace *twins*.]

EXERCISE A Circle the underlined word that is a pronoun in the following sentences. Each sentence has two words underlined, and *only one of them is a pronoun*.

Example 1. Mel and Chi helped themselves to a plate of spaghetti. [The word *themselves* is a pronoun because it is used in place of *Mel and Chi*.]

1. The singers warmed up their voices before the show. [Which word is used in place of *singers*?]
2. Dr. Ito said, "Where did I put my glasses?"
3. When you are finished, please put the book back on the shelf where you found it.
4. Steve, did you finish your art class at the community college yet?
5. Nelson and I laughed when we saw the remote-controlled car jump over the ramp.

Personal Pronouns

A *personal pronoun* refers to the one speaking (*first person*), the one spoken to (*second person*), or the one spoken about (*third person*).

FIRST PERSON **We** wanted to cook **our** own dinner. [The personal pronouns *We* and *our* refer to the people speaking.]

SECOND PERSON Are **your** muscles still sore from the soccer game yesterday? [The personal pronoun *your* refers to the person to whom someone is speaking.]

THIRD PERSON Joanie is the club's treasurer; **she** likes to keep track of money. [The personal pronoun *she* refers to the person, *Joanie*, about whom someone is speaking.]

EXERCISE B Underline each personal pronoun in the sentences that follow. Some sentences have more than one personal pronoun.

Example 1. Teresa, would you like to demonstrate your science project to the class? [The second person pronouns *you* and *your* replace *Teresa*.]

6. When Deb and Roland ran for the student council, they both won. [Which word is used in place of *Deb and Roland*?]
7. What a good speaker she was!
8. Jennifer Gonzales just said, "I would like to volunteer at the clothing drive this weekend."
9. Because the cat was sleepy, it took its nap after dinner.
10. Justin asked his uncle to check the spark plugs and change them.

Antecedents

The word that a pronoun stands for (or refers to) is called the pronoun's *antecedent*. The antecedent can come before or after a pronoun.

ANT PRON

BEFORE PRONOUN As for **Ryan**, **he** wants a new bike helmet. [The pronoun *he* stands for *Ryan*.

Ryan is the antecedent of *he*.]

PRON ANT

AFTER PRONOUN For **himself**, **Ryan** wants a new bike helmet. [The pronoun *himself* stands for

Ryan, even though *himself* comes first. *Ryan* is the antecedent of *himself*.]

Sometimes the antecedent is not stated.

EXAMPLES I will meet **you** at the library. [I refers to the speaker, and *you* refers to the person spoken to.]

Who is the new neighbor? [The speaker doesn't know *who* is.]

Somebody needs to shut the door before the dog escapes! [The indefinite pronoun *Somebody* does not have an antecedent.]

EXERCISE C Underline the pronoun in each of the following sentences. Then, draw an arrow to the pronoun's antecedent. If a pronoun does not have an antecedent, write *none* on the line.

Example _____ 1. Yes, Tim did all the research himself. [*Himself* is a pronoun because it refers to another word, *Tim*. *Tim* is the word that *himself* refers to, so *Tim* is the antecedent of *himself*.]

11. Will Rosa be playing first violin tonight, or will she be out of town? [Which word is used in place of another word? Which word is being replaced by another word?]
12. The moon has craters on its surface.
13. What is black and white and read all over?
14. During the ceremony, the president himself cut the ribbon.
15. Kangaroos carry their young in a special pouch.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement A

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun or another pronoun. The word a pronoun replaces is called the pronoun's *antecedent*.

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

Singular Pronouns and Antecedents

Singular pronouns agree with singular antecedents, which may be nouns or other pronouns.

EXAMPLE The dough rose in its pan. [The singular pronoun *its* agrees with its singular antecedent, *dough*.]

Some singular pronouns also have forms that tell the gender of the person or thing they name. *Feminine pronouns* (*she, her, hers, herself*) refer to females. *Masculine pronouns* (*he, him, his, himself*) refer to males. *Neuter pronouns* (*it, its, itself*) refer to things that are neither female nor male. Neuter pronouns also sometimes refer to animals.

EXAMPLES **A** She asked for croutons on her salad. [The feminine pronoun *her* agrees with its feminine antecedent, *She*.]

A My brother said that he might want to go to a movie this weekend. [The masculine pronoun *he* agrees with its masculine antecedent, *brother*.]

P Carefully take the bread out of the oven before it burns! [The neuter pronoun *it* agrees with the neuter antecedent, *bread*.]

EXERCISE A Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedent that has been underlined. Then, write an appropriate pronoun in each blank. The pronoun you choose must agree in number and gender with its antecedent.

Example 1. Maria stays busy in her room after school. [The antecedent, *Maria*, is singular and feminine, so the pronoun must also be singular and feminine.]

1. A bluejay is building _____ nest in our yard. [Which pronoun agrees with *bluejay*?]
2. Please ask Mr. Winters if _____ would help us with the car wash this weekend.
3. Before the concert, Carlos polishes _____ trombone.
4. Is Betsy's sister a pilot, or is _____ a doctor?
5. Has Mom made _____ delicious vegetable stew tonight?

Plural Pronouns and Antecedents

Plural pronouns agree with plural antecedents, which may be nouns or other pronouns.

EXAMPLE The mushrooms simmered in their own juices. [The plural pronoun *their* agrees with the plural antecedent, the noun *mushrooms*.]

GO ON 

NOTE Plural pronouns do not show gender.

EXERCISE B Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedent that has been underlined. Then, write an appropriate pronoun in each blank. The pronoun you choose must agree in number and gender with its antecedent.

Example 1. We students stay busy in our town on Friday nights. [The antecedent We is plural, so the pronoun must be plural, too.]

6. The team members prepare for _____ big game on Saturday. [Which pronoun agrees with the antecedent *members*?]
7. Please find out whether the files have labels on _____.
8. The yearbook photographers load _____ cameras with film.
9. Did your parents say that _____ could take us to the exhibit?
10. The girls say that a great performance is important to _____.

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

EXAMPLE Teresa or Nina will go with **her** group to the science fair. [The singular pronoun *her* agrees with the singular antecedents, *Teresa* and *Nina*, which are joined by *or*.]

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

EXAMPLE Both the lamp and the table have scratches on **them**. [The plural pronoun *them* agrees with the antecedents *lamp* and *table*, which are joined by *and*.]

EXERCISE C Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedents that have been underlined and the word that joins them. Then, write an appropriate pronoun in each blank. The pronoun you choose must agree in number and gender with its antecedent.

Example 1. Have Patrick and Julie said that they would be there? [The plural pronoun *they* agrees with the antecedents *Patrick* and *Julie*, which are joined by *and*.]

11. Stephen and Jeremy gave _____ addresses to us. [What word joins the two antecedents? Which pronoun agrees with the antecedents?]
12. Either Mrs. Lee or Mrs. Stewart will announce _____ decision.
13. Will both Janet and Karen read _____ poems?
14. Neither Jason nor Marc finished _____ homework yet.
15. Either Connie or Rebecca will play _____ song before Jane performs.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement B

Sometimes the antecedent of a pronoun is another pronoun. Some pronouns are always singular. Other pronouns are always plural. Some pronouns may be either singular or plural. In some cases, a noun in the phrase that follows the antecedent determines the number and gender of the antecedent.

Singular Pronouns

Use a singular pronoun to refer to these indefinite pronouns:

anybody	either	neither	one
anyone	everybody	nobody	somebody
anything	everyone	no one	someone
each	everything	nothing	something

EXAMPLE **Somebody** should offer **his or her** help. [His or her agrees in number with the antecedent *Somebody*, because both are singular. His or her agrees in gender, too, because *Somebody* may include both males and females.]

EXERCISE A Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedent that has been underlined. Then, circle the pronoun or pronoun group that agrees in number and gender with the antecedent.

Example 1. Did no one have (his or her) their lunch yet? [The pronoun group *his or her* agrees with the antecedent *no one* in number, because both are singular.]

1. Everyone raised (*his or her, their*) eyes to look. [Which pronoun or pronoun group agrees with the indefinite pronoun *Everyone*?]
2. Did either of the birds leave (*its, their*) nest?
3. Each of the lionesses groomed (*her, their*) own cubs.
4. Somebody must have left (*his or her, their*) lights on.
5. Please put everything back in (*its, their*) place before leaving.

Plural Pronouns

Use a plural pronoun to refer to these indefinite pronouns: *both, few, many, several*.

EXAMPLES **Few** of the picnickers brought **their** umbrellas. [The pronoun *their* agrees with the antecedent *Few*, because both are plural.]

A **Are both** of those seats taken, or are **they** free? [The pronoun *they* agrees with the antecedent *both*, because both are plural.]

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EXERCISE B Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedent that has been underlined. Then, circle the pronoun or pronoun group that agrees in number and gender with the antecedent.

- Example 1.** A few of the words were written on the board; (they/it) were not hard to spell. [The pronoun *they* agrees with the antecedent *few*, because both are plural.]
6. Did several of your friends get (*his* or *her*, *their*) invitations in the mail? [Which pronoun or pronoun group agrees with the antecedent *several*?]
7. Please see if both of the cups are dirty. If so, we should wash (*it*, *them*) right now.
8. At the park, many of the children are playing with (*its*, *their*) friends.
9. Few of the books have prices on (*it*, *them*).
10. Several of Jason's friends have brought (*his* or *her*, *their*) photo albums.

Singular or Plural Pronouns

These indefinite pronouns may be singular or plural, depending on how they are used in a sentence:

all	any	more	most	none	some
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To identify the number of one of these pronouns, look at the phrase that follows the pronoun. If the noun in that phrase is singular, the pronoun is singular, too. If the noun in that phrase is plural, the pronoun is plural, too.

EXAMPLES Has any of the **spice** lost **its** flavor? [The pronoun *its* agrees with the antecedent *any*, which is singular because it refers to just one spice.]
 Have any of the **spices** lost **their** flavors? [The pronoun *their* agrees with the antecedent *any*, which is plural because it refers to more than one spice.]

EXERCISE C Read each sentence below, paying attention to the antecedent that has been underlined. Then, circle the pronoun that agrees in number and gender with the antecedent.

- Example 1.** Have none of the roses opened (*its*, *their*) blossoms yet? [The pronoun *their* agrees with the antecedent *none*, which is plural because it refers to more than one rose.]
11. If any of the fruit is still good, I will eat (*them*, *it*) after school. [Is the antecedent *any* singular or plural? Which pronoun agrees with the antecedent?]
12. Most of the ants abandoned (*its*, *their*) mound.
13. Why was all of the casserole still in (*its*, *their*) dish after the meal?
14. Some of the camera equipment has not been put in (*their*, *its*) place on the shelf.
15. Have more of the players brought (*his* or *her*, *their*) uniforms?