

## Making Pronouns Agree with Their Antecedents

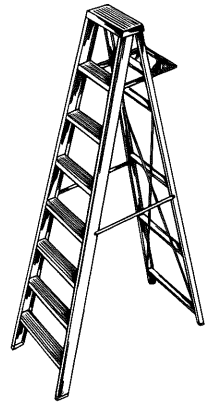
A **pronoun** is a word used in place of a noun. The word the pronoun replaces is called its **antecedent**. The antecedent usually comes before the pronoun in the same sentence or in a previous sentence.

Regina is meeting her friends for lunch.  
(The antecedent of the pronoun *her* is *Regina*.)

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in three ways. First, they must agree in number.

If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural. Antecedents that are nouns or pronouns joined by *and* are considered to be plural. Pay special attention to pronouns whose antecedents are indefinite pronouns. If you have questions about whether the indefinite pronoun is singular or plural, refer to the chart on page 27.

*Justin* is painting his house gray. (singular)  
The *neighbors* painted their house last year. (plural)  
*Joe and Tom* have loaned Justin their ladder. (plural)  
*Neither* of the helpers brought his or her paintbrush. (singular)  
*Both* of the brothers are known for helping their friends. (plural)



**Underline the pronoun in each sentence. Circle its antecedent.**

1. Caitlin is making new curtains for her bedroom.
2. Several of the travelers lost their luggage.
3. When the concert was canceled, the fans demanded that they get refunds.
4. Dr. Frankenstein was shocked by the power of his creation.
5. The dog looked around the room for its favorite toy.
6. During the storm, everyone turned his or her windshield wipers on.
7. The storm did its damage between midnight and one o'clock.
8. Joan and Rita are planning a surprise party for their parents.
9. The hyena and the gazelle are known for their incredible speed.
10. Most of the students helped themselves to the handouts the speaker supplied.

## B Practice

Secondly, pronouns must agree with their antecedents in gender. *He, him,* and *his* must have masculine antecedents. *She, her,* and *hers* must have feminine antecedents. *It* and *its* must have neuter antecedents. When the gender of an antecedent is unclear, as in a singular indefinite pronoun such as *everyone*, use phrases such as *he or she* and *his or her*.

Dave picks up his son at day care every day. (masculine)

Sharon left her car at the train station. (feminine)

The *mosquito* bothered me when it flew around my ear. (neuter)

*Everyone* was sure his or her choice was best. (singular indefinite)

Finally, pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person. Whether the antecedent is in the first person, second person, or third person, the pronoun should match it.

We gave ourselves plenty of time to reach the airport. (first person)

You yourself should visit Europe someday. (second person)

The *inventor* had the idea, but he didn't get rich. (third person)

Remember that relative pronouns must agree with their antecedents. When the antecedents are people, use *who* and *whom*. When the antecedents are not people, use *which* and *that*.

*Passengers* who come late must reschedule their flights.

The *plane* that we took was nearly empty.

**Underline the pronoun that completes each sentence correctly. Circle its antecedent.**

1. Although the model was also a scientist, (you, she) kept her scientific work a secret.
2. The college thanked the millionaire (which, who) had contributed so much.
3. Everyone wants to know (his or her, their) score on the driving test right away.
4. Many of the students pass the test on (his or her, their) first try.
5. Swimmers can leave (his, their) belongings in the locker room.
6. The workers (themselves, ourselves) were running the company.
7. Amy and Lindsey signed (her, their) names on the petition.
8. Somebody left (his or her, their) lunch in the refrigerator for weeks.
9. The sweater (whom, that) I bought last week shrank in the dryer.
10. Brian was driving the car when (they, it) caught on fire.

## **C** Apply

Look for a pronoun-antecedent error in each sentence. If you find an error, rewrite the sentence correctly on the line. If there is no error, write *Correct* on the line.

1. The teacher that took a special interest in me was Mr. Wesley.

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2. Anna Moses took up painting when he was more than 70 years old.

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3. Both Dean and Paul hardly ever answer his phones on the first ring.

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4. The guests hung their coats in the hall closet.

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5. Most of the participants felt that his or her time was well spent.

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6. The music hall, who was built in 1898, is being renovated.

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7. Anybody with a password can access their account.

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8. When Ellen and Megan met again, she screamed and hugged.

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9. I washed this window twice because they still seemed dirty.

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10. When Terri gets up too early, you get tired around three o'clock.

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11. Either Sean, the plumber, or Ralph, the carpenter, left his tools here.

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12. Many of the audience members got to our feet and applauded.

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**D****Check Up**

Choose the pronoun that completes each sentence correctly.

1. The players took \_\_\_\_\_ places in the field.  
A our  
B her  
C their  
D its
2. Dad \_\_\_\_\_ fixed the broken window.  
F yourself  
G ourselves  
H themselves  
J himself
3. The actress won praise for \_\_\_\_\_ work in the play.  
A his  
B her  
C ours  
D their
4. My friend, \_\_\_\_\_ used to be afraid of dogs, just got a Doberman.  
F who  
G whose  
H that  
J which

Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

5. A Lupe and Anna parked her cars in the garage.  
B We invited Sam and Barb, but they couldn't come.  
C Maybe Tim and Mark will bring his vacation pictures.  
D I might fire Ann and Kate, or I might give her a second chance.
6. F Neither of the umpires wore their face mask.  
G Both of the mothers took their toddlers to the playground.  
H Several of the boats had drifted away from its moorings.  
J One of the trees had lost all their leaves already.
7. A The directors gave themselves big raises.  
B Isaac excused ourselves and went to answer the phone.  
C We myself haven't read the book.  
D You yourselves can repair the damage.
8. F Virginia is the artist which illustrated the children's book.  
G The car who led the parade was an old Model T.  
H A few of the people whom we invited brought gifts.  
J Do you know the lifeguard that is on duty today?