

Essential Agreements

Making Your Sentences Work:
Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- *What is a pronoun?*
- *What is an antecedent?*



Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun.
- An **antecedent** is the word to which the pronoun refers.
- Example: The boy lost his hat.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Pronoun and antecedent must agree:
 - If the antecedent is **singular**, the pronoun must be **singular**.
 - If the antecedent is **plural**, the pronoun must be **plural**.

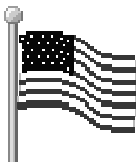


Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- The **boys** played **their** best and won the game.
 - *Boys* is plural, so *their* must be plural.
- The **girl** lost **her** ribbon.
 - *Girl* is singular, so *her* must be singular.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- In American English, **group nouns** are usually singular:
 - The **team** won **its** game.
 - The **committee** has made **its** decision.



... so they take a singular pronoun.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

If the group noun is clearly plural, use a plural pronoun. You may want to add **members** for clarity:

- The staff have put their gifts under the Christmas tree.
- The staff [**members**] have put their gifts under the Christmas tree.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Sometimes the antecedent is an indefinite pronoun.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular:
anybody everyone no one
somebody each neither
- Use a singular pronoun with these:
Neither of the boys did his homework.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- A few indefinite pronouns are plural:
both several few many
- Use a plural pronoun with these:
Both of the boys had their homework.
Both did their work cheerfully.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Some indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural, depending on the meaning of the sentence.
some all most none
- Some of the band members forgot their sheet music.
- Some of the book is still attached to its binding.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement



Pronouns and antecedents must agree in gender as well as number.

To avoid pronouns that exclude one gender, use one of three options.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

1. Use a masculine and feminine pronoun (his/her).
- Each contestant must bring his or her birth certificate.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

2. Rewrite the sentence, making both pronoun and antecedent plural.
 - All contestants must bring their birth certificate.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

3. Rewrite the sentence to eliminate the possessive pronouns.
 - Each contestant must bring a birth certificate.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Compound subjects joined by and take a plural pronoun.
- Linda and Amy finished their project early.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- When two antecedents are joined by either . . . or or neither . . . nor, the pronoun should agree with the antecedent closer to it.
- Neither the teacher nor the students wore their coats to the game.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- If the sentence sounds awkward, consider rewording.
 - We have been promised that either the Oak Ridge Boys or Clint Black will donate his time to the charity. (awkward)
 - We have been promised that either Clint Black or the Oak Ridge Boys will donate their time to the charity.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Be careful not to word a sentence so that the antecedent is missing or unclear.
 - **Wrong:** In Nashville, they have many hopeful country music singers. (Who does *they* refer to?)
 - **Wrong:** Alice told Marie that she needed a new car. (Who needed a new car, Alice or Marie?)

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Watch shifts to *you*.

- **Wrong:** When a person comes to class, *you* should have your homework ready.
- **Wrong:** We are all aware that *you* can't depend on the boss for help.

Keep it friendly!

- Be sure your pronoun and antecedent **agree!**

