

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, gender, and person. An antecedent is the noun or pronoun that a pronoun refers to or replaces.

Agreement in Number

If the antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun. If it is plural, use a plural pronoun.

Because this **dollhouse** is almost 300 years old, **it** is historically important.

The **furnishings** are noticeably different from **their** modern counterparts.

Compound Subjects – A plural pronoun is used to refer to nouns or pronouns joined by **and**.

The tiny **chest and dresser** still have **their** original hardware.

A pronoun that refers to nouns or pronouns joined by **or** or **nor** should agree with the noun or pronoun nearest to it.

Neither the astronauts nor **NASA** neglected **its** duties.

Neither NASA nor the **astronauts** neglected **their** duties.

Collective Nouns – A collective noun such as class, crew, team, audience, or family may be referred to by either a singular or a plural pronoun, depending upon the meaning of the noun in the sentence.

- A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be singular if the collective noun names a group acting as a unit.

The **family** that owns the house loaned **its** treasure to the library.

(singular - The family is acting as a single unit)

- A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be plural if the collective noun names the members or parts of a group acting individually.

The **family** wanted **their** friends to see the house.

(plural - The family members are acting individually)

Agreement in Gender & Person

The gender of the pronoun – masculine (he, his, him), feminine (she, her, hers) or neutral (it, its) – must be the same as the gender of its antecedent. The person (first, second, third) of the pronoun also must agree with the person of its antecedent.

You would be proud to see **your** work appreciated by future generations.

Any **artist** would like **his or her** creation to last for hundreds of years.

An **astronaut** conducts **his or her** experiments during the flight.

Tip: You can often avoid the awkward “his or her” construction by making both the pronoun and its antecedent plural. Notice that you may also need to change the verb to a plural form.

Artists would like **their** creation to last for hundreds of years.

Astronauts conduct **their** experiments during the flight.

Indefinite Pronouns as Antecedents

When an indefinite pronoun is the antecedent of a personal pronoun, the personal pronoun must agree in number with the indefinite pronoun.

Always Singular: another, each, everything, one, anybody, either, neither, somebody, anyone, everybody, nobody, someone, anything, everyone, no one

Always Plural: both, few, many, several

Singular or Plural: all, none, any, some, most

Use a singular pronoun to refer to a singular indefinite pronoun. The phrase “his or her” is considered a singular pronoun.

Each of the cars has **its** sponsor's name painted on **it**. (singular)

Use a plural pronoun to refer to a plural indefinite pronoun.

Many of the cars are in **their** first race. (plural)

Some indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural. Use the meaning of the sentence to determine whether the indefinite pronoun is singular or plural.

Some of the equipment was still packed in **its** containers. (singular)

Some of the race teams were still looking for **their** equipment. (plural)