

## Agreement of Pronoun and Antecedent

The antecedent of a pronoun is the word to which the pronoun refers and for which it stands.

**A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number.**

- Examples
1. Our pitcher was sure that he would win.
  2. Each girl took her turn at bat.
  3. A few of the students had brought **their** own lunches.
  4. Several teachers expressed **their** opinions.

In the first two sentences above, the antecedents *pitcher* and *girl* are singular. Notice that the pronouns *he* and *her* (printed in red), which refer to these antecedents, are also singular. The pronouns, therefore, agree with their antecedents in number.

In sentences 3 and 4 the antecedents *few* and *teachers* are plural. The pronouns *their* and *their*, which refer to *few* and *teachers*, are also plural. They therefore agree with their antecedents.

.As you learned in your study of agreement between verb and subject, the following words are singular: *each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one, nobody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody*. Use singular pronouns when referring to these words.

**One way to avoid the awkward *his or her* construction is for the writer to use his gender when using a singular pronoun.**

*Note:* In ordinary conversation we often hear *their* instead of *his* or *her* when referring to *everyone, everybody, anybody* because these words strongly suggest more than one person. However, in formal writing and in doing the exercises in this book, use the singular pronouns (*his, hers, its*, etc.) in referring to these words. In your own writing, you can, if you wish, avoid the problem of agreement with *everyone* by making the subject plural. For example, instead of saying *Everyone brought his lunch*, you could say *All brought their lunch*.

**Two or more antecedents joined by *and* should be referred to by a plural pronoun.**

EXAMPLE: Rachel and Pat gave *their* speeches in class.

**Two or more singular antecedents joined by *or* or *nor* should be referred by a singular pronoun.**

EXAMPLE: Neither Rachel nor Pat gave *her* speech in class

However, when one of the antecedents is plural, the pronoun agrees in number with the closer antecedent.

Neither Rachel nor her *friends* gave *their* speeches in class.

### EXERCISE 1

A. Correct the following sentences, if needed.

1. If you see either of my sisters, ask them to call me.
2. Remember to correct the pronouns that do not agree with their antecedents.

3. Neither student has completed their assignment.
4. Everyone wore their costume to the party.
5. Not one of my friends asked his parents.
6. Each of the dogs was looking for its trainer.
7. Anyone who thought that deserved what they got.
8. Neither of them would lend me their book.
9. A student should accept her responsibilities.
10. Nobody in the class has done their assignment very well.

**B.** Fill the blank in each of the following sentences with a pronoun which will agree with its antecedent. Draw a line under the antecedent.

- A. Everyone brought \_\_\_\_\_ skates.
- B. Only one of the girls brought \_\_\_\_\_ tennis racket.
1. Many of the parents voiced \_\_\_\_\_ opinions.
  2. No one wanted \_\_\_\_\_ name mentioned in the paper.
  3. Each student was given a locker for \_\_\_\_\_ equipment.
  4. If everyone had \_\_\_\_\_ way, we'd never get anything done.
  5. Both Mrs. Larson and Mr. Feldman took \_\_\_\_\_ classes on a trip.
  6. Everybody said what \_\_\_\_\_ thought.
  7. Neither wanted to have \_\_\_\_\_ picture taken.
  8. Some of the group expressed \_\_\_\_\_ opinions quite frankly.
  9. Both the carpenter and the welder finished \_\_\_\_\_ work yesterday.
  10. A person should be careful of \_\_\_\_\_ English.

**Exercise 2.**

**A.** Correct the following sentences, if needed.

1. Evereybody thinks that their own child is the most intelligent.
2. Each of his sisters put themselves through engineering school.
3. No one in his right mind would ever drive at that speed.
4. I k now someone who might sell you their ticket.
5. Not everyone realizes what he gets in return for his taxes.

6. Either of these girls will lend you their notes.
7. Nearly everyone likes to see their name in print.
8. Every child should earn at least part of his spending money.
9. Nobody should be made to feel that they must like poetry.
10. Each person will contribute their favorite recipe to the cookbook.
11. If you want to apologize to someone, don't delay talking to them.
12. Almost anyone can increase his reading rate greatly.
13. Any student who has been absent should find out what work they missed.
14. Ask anybody where the Eiffel Tower is, and he can tell you.
15. Everybody can make themselves an expert in some field.

**B. Underline the correct pronoun. (Add 10 points for each correct answer.)**

1. A lion or a tiger will always defend (its, their) young.
2. A lion and a tiger will always defend (its, their) young.
3. Neither Nancy nor Ellen did (their, her) homework.
4. If there is a nut or raisin in this cookie, I can't find (them, it).
5. If you have a complaint or a suggestion, tell the editor about (them, it).
6. After Pam borrowed my rod and net, she forgot to return (them, it).
7. Neither Ross nor Allan could persuade (himself, themselves) to try.
8. You can use my knife and fork as long as you wash (it, them).
9. If you break a cup or saucer, you can't replace (them, it).
10. Christine and one other girl didn't eat (their, her) salad.
11. Don't offer a ride to anybody unless you know (him, them).
12. Each of the members told (their, his) favorite tall story.
13. If anyone should phone, tell (them, him) I'll be back in an hour.
14. Only a few of the girls considered (themselves, herself) ready for a test.
15. I tried to get everyone the kind of gift (they, he) wanted., 10. Anyone who fails to report a crime is shirking (his, their) moral duty.
16. If you should see Don and Vic, tell (them, him) about the meeting.
17. If you should see Don or Vic, tell (them, him) about the meeting.
18. Their food and service are better than (they, it) used to be.

19. Does an oak or a maple shed (its, their) leaves earlier in the fall?
20. I take math and chemistry because I need (it, them) for engineering.
21. If the jacket or the coat is too long, you can shorten (it, them).
22. Both Alice and Maria wondered if the speaker was referring to (her, them).
23. If you like good pie or cake, you can get (it, them) at Swanson's.

**Exercise 3 Fix them if they need it.**

1. Both the stores raised its prices.
2. Neither of the scientists completed their experiment.
3. Everything was returned to their owner.
4. The students are ready to settle their differences.
5. The police and the fire departments have abandoned its, efforts to rescue the child from the mine.
6. Neither the child nor his parents have returned their books to the library.
7. The cat carried her kittens into the house.
8. Neither the speakers nor the moderator did her best to explore the question.
9. Neither the moderator nor the speakers did his best to explore the question.
10. Some large animal has left his tracks in the mud behind the house.
11. The Board of Supervisors has consented to continue the hearing until every registered spokesman has the opportunity to voice their opinion.
12. Childhood is the time to have measles because they can be quite dangerous to an adult.
13. It is impossible for a person to be cheated by anyone but themselves.
14. Every sweet has its sour; every evil its good.
15. The youth of the nation must receive its due.
16. Ownership of property has their duties as well as rights.
17. The masses of our countrymen are eager to clasp hands across the bloody chasm that has divided it.
18. Every person at last meets their Waterloo.
19. A person is used as they uses others.
20. All will be judged by her actions.
21. The water and the smoke have done its damage.
22. Every person is like the company they are accustomed to keeping.
23. Consider the little mouse: how sagacious it is never to trust his life to one hole only.
24. This and a great deal more like them I have had to put up with.
25. The fire department and the underwriters have completed its investigation of the disaster.

