

Pronoun Antecedent Agreement

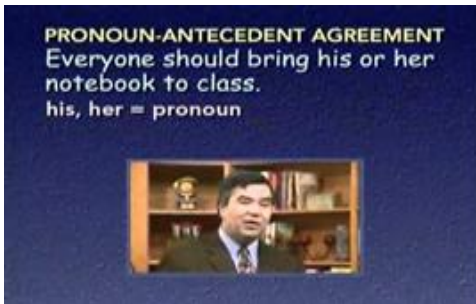
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Pronoun and Antecedent



A pronoun is a substitute for a [noun](#). It refers to a person place or thing, feeling or quality but does not refer to it by name.

Example: Tammy wrote a speech for the function. It was well written.



An antecedent is a [phrase](#) or [clause](#) to which the person refers, understood by the context.

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in 3 ways.

- Person: refers to the quality of being.
- Number: is the quality that is distinguished between the singular and the plural.
- Gender: is the quality that distinguishes the entity as masculine or feminine.

Pronoun Antecedent Error-examples

1. If a person wants to achieve something in life you have to work hard.

Here the antecedent and pronoun agree in number but not in person.

The correct sentence is:

- **If a man wants to achieve something in life he must work hard.**

2. Each one has their own cupboard.

Each one is singular and should have a singular pronoun.

The correct sentence is:

- **Each one has his or her own cupboard**



Pronoun Antecedent Agreement Rules

There are nine pronoun antecedent agreement rules. These rules are related to the rules found in subject-verb agreement.

1. A phrase or clause between the subject and verb does not change the number of the antecedent

Example: **The bottle of coke sits on its tray.**

2. Singular indefinite pronoun antecedent takes singular pronoun referents.

Example:

- **Each of the boys does his work well in the factory.**

Plural indefinite pronouns require plural referents.

Example:

- **Both are good at their work.**

Some indefinite pronouns that are modified by prepositional phrase may be either singular or plural.

Example:

- **Most of the rice fell out of its container.**

When the object of preposition is countable, use a plural.

Example:

- **Some of the nuts fell out of their bag.**

3. When compound subjects are joined they always take a plural referent.

Example:

- **Jane and Mary made their presentation.**

4. With compound subjects joined by or/nor the referent pronoun agrees with the antecedent closer to the pronoun.

Example:

- **Neither the boy nor the girl finished their dinner.**

5. Collective pronouns may be singular or plural depending on meaning.

Example:

- **The team won its match.**

If team members act as individuals then the referent is plural.

Example:

- **The team members fought among themselves.**

6. Titles of single entities (books, organization, countries etc.) take a single referent.

Example:

- **The United Nations made its policies clear.**

7. The plural form of subject with a singular meaning takes a singular [referent](#).

Example:

- **The measles spread after a week.**

8. Every or many before a noun or a series of nouns require a singular referent.

Example:

- **Many a man has lost his life in war.**

9. The number of vs A number of before a [subject](#).

Example:

- **A number of people are donating clothes.**

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Reference Links:

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- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T4xw5C74Ps>
- <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/pronante.html>
- http://www.towson.edu/ows/pro_antagree.htm
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