

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

## Reteaching

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.

If the antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun. If it is plural, use a plural pronoun. Use a plural pronoun to refer to nouns or pronouns joined by *and*.

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

The young girl paints portraits. Her work is popular among wealthy clients.

The students are apt, and they show amazing abilities at an early age.

A duke and his wife commission the girl to paint their portraits.

Neither her father nor her sisters can conceal their pride.

A collective noun such as *committee* may be referred to by either a singular or a plural pronoun. The number of the collective noun is determined by its meaning in the sentence. Use a singular pronoun if the collective noun names a group acting as a unit. Use a plural pronoun if the collective noun shows the members or parts of a group acting individually.

The committee publishes its stands on all important issues. (singular)

The committee cast their votes by secret ballot. (plural)

The **gender** of a pronoun must be the same as the gender of its antecedent. Remember that gender refers to the forms of personal pronouns—masculine (*he, his, him*), feminine (*she, her, hers*), or neuter (*it, its*). Do not use only masculine or only feminine pronouns when you mean to refer to both genders. The purpose of gender-free language is to make sure you include everyone.

The artist was famous for the speed with which she painted.

## Identifying Pronouns and Their Antecedents

In each sentence underline the pronoun once and the antecedent twice.

1. Elisabetta Sirani was a popular painter in the 1600s, although she has been nearly forgotten.
2. Elisabetta's father was a painter, and he tutored Elisabetta at a time when girls were not expected to excel in any profession.
3. When Giovanni saw that Elisabetta had talent, he began to dream of commissions.
4. The people of Bologna were impressed with their talented townsperson's work.
5. Bologna invited Elisabetta to paint a scene from the life of Christ for its church.
6. Elisabetta opened a painting school; the student body were quick to prove their talent.
7. Neither Elisabetta nor the popular painter's sisters were allowed to rest from their work for long.
8. Each painting had its own requirements and demands.
9. Elisabetta and the other daughters tried to please their father with endless toil.
10. Although Elisabetta wanted to rest, her father set unreachable goals.
11. Giovanni ignored Elisabetta's fatigue; he continually expected perfection.

## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

*More Practice*

### A. Identifying Pronouns and Their Antecedents

In each sentence underline the pronoun once and the antecedent twice.

1. Matthew Henson longed to embark on his own adventure.
2. As an African American just after the Civil War, Henson had to deal with a prejudiced society and all its restrictions.
3. In 1887, Henson accompanied Robert Peary on his exploration of Nicaragua.
4. Peary and Henson set their next goal—to reach the North Pole.
5. To survive in the north, Henson studied the Inuit people and copied their ways.
6. Peary soon discovered that Henson and his survival skills were essential.
7. The native people taught Henson their time-tested methods of driving a dogsled.
8. Members of the expedition had their share of health problems, including frostbite.
9. Some sled dogs couldn't stand the weather; they often died without warning.
10. Henson and Peary reached their goal—reaching the North Pole—in 1909.
11. While Peary became famous, Henson and his contribution were forgotten for many years.

### B. Making Pronouns and Antecedents Agree

Underline the pronoun that correctly completes each sentence. Then underline the antecedent(s) of the pronoun.

1. Two cardinals make (its, their) home in that tree every spring.
2. Juan and Louis compared (his, their) collections of rare coins.
3. Flower lovers prize the rose for (its, their) delicate scent.
4. George Bernard Shaw didn't become a successful playwright until the publication of a collection of (its, his) plays.
5. Like other gifted child performers, Shirley Temple was known for learning (her, their) lines quickly.
6. Those directors shot (his, their) films on location in Australia.
7. Katie and Abbie are both in (her, their) first year of high school.
8. That mother seal lost (her, their) pup during the ice storm.
9. Brazilians celebrate (its, their) independence day on September 7.
10. The panther is quite beautiful; (its, their) coat is jet black.
11. The team is excited about (its, their) new uniforms.
12. Neither the ticket-taker nor the ushers have any of (his, their) programs left.
13. All you students taking the test will need (their, your) identification cards.
14. The southbound flock of geese made (their, its) characteristic V in the fall sky.
15. Marilyn and her brother pooled (his, their) money for the party.