



# Types of Pronouns and Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

## DEFINITION OF PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

A *pronoun* is a word that takes the place of a noun or refers to a noun or another pronoun. The word a pronoun refers to is the *antecedent*. Look at the following example:

*Beverly* says that *she* is happy.

*She* is the pronoun and refers to *Beverly*, the antecedent.

The antecedent usually appears before the pronoun that refers to it, but it also can follow the pronoun. Look at the example:

Having sold his car, *Chuck* had to ride the bus.

*His* is the pronoun; *Chuck* is the antecedent.

Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in number, just as subjects and verbs must agree. A singular antecedent takes a singular pronoun; a plural antecedent takes a plural pronoun. Look at the following examples:

**Singular:** *I* returned *my* purchase to the bookstore.

**Plural:** The *students* returned *their* purchases to the bookstore.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ In the sentences below, some singular pronouns are circled. Write those pronouns and their antecedents in the blanks.

|   | Pronoun    | Antecedent   |
|---|------------|--------------|
| <b>Example:</b> Laura gave (her) report to Mr. Brown.                       | <u>her</u> | <u>Laura</u> |
| 1. Bonnie needs to paint (her) kitchen.                                     | _____      | _____        |
| 2. I took a test, but I failed (it).  | _____      | _____        |
| 3. Robert is not speaking because (he) is angry.                            | _____      | _____        |
| 4. The flower lost (its) fragrance.   | _____      | _____        |
| 5. Mrs. Hawkins is the new composition teacher, and (she) is very friendly. | _____      | _____        |
| 6. I told Annie I would meet (her) today.                                   | _____      | _____        |

7. The bird is busy building its nest. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I found my book in Joan's car. \_\_\_\_\_



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ In the sentences below, some plural pronouns are circled. Write those pronouns and their antecedents in the blanks.

|   | Pronoun      | Antecedent        |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>Example:</b> Kim and Clark gave their advice to Cheryl.                                | <u>their</u> | <u>Kim, Clark</u> |
| 1. The appliances on sale are worth their prices.   | _____        | _____             |
| 2. Cooking and baking are Mark's hobbies; he really enjoys them.                          | _____        | _____             |
| 3. Tim and Mom took their time in getting here.   | _____        | _____             |
| 4. The managers e-mailed their reports.   | _____        | _____             |
| 5. The waiters asked for raises, but they did not get them.                               | _____        | _____             |
| 6. The stamps in Bill's collection are interesting; he has collected them for many years. | _____        | _____             |
| 7. The towels need to be washed because they are greasy.                                  | _____        | _____             |
| 8. Bananas and apples are good for a diet because they offer vitamins and fiber.          | _____        | _____             |

### AGREEMENT: PERSONAL PRONOUNS

A personal pronoun referring to a singular antecedent is singular. Look at the example:

Although the average *consumer* wants a bargain, *he* may not recognize one.

*He* is singular; the antecedent *consumer* is singular.

A personal pronoun referring to a plural antecedent is plural. Look at the example:

Although average *consumers* want a bargain, *they* may not recognize one.

*They* is plural; the antecedent *consumers* is plural. Review the following list of personal pronouns.

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS**

| Singular       |   | Plural         |                                 |
|----------------|---|----------------|---------------------------------|
| first person:  | I<br>me<br>my<br>mine                               | first person:  | we<br>us<br>our<br>ours         |
| second person: | you<br>your<br>yours                                | second person: | you<br>your<br>yours            |
| third person:  | he<br>him<br>his<br>she<br>her<br>hers<br>it<br>its | third person:  | they<br>them<br>their<br>theirs |



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ In the sentences below, the antecedents are italicized. Provide the correct personal pronoun in the blanks.

**Example:** *Dr. Ann Wheeler* washed her car on a clear, sunny morning.

- The photography *students* handed in \_\_\_\_\_ portfolios.
- Melody and Wayne* are having \_\_\_\_\_ house remodeled.
- The *employees* have \_\_\_\_\_ lunch schedules worked out already.
- The *street* looks slick because \_\_\_\_\_ is covered with ice.
- The *farmers* and the *state senators* met today; \_\_\_\_\_ discussed the many problems facing the farmers.
- Having \_\_\_\_\_ fiftieth birthday today, *Will* feels old.
- We grow *squash* and *tomatoes*; \_\_\_\_\_ taste great fresh from the garden.
- Susan* is designing a church; \_\_\_\_\_ is a student in architectural design.
- The *card* is from Carrie; \_\_\_\_\_ is quite funny.
- \_\_\_\_\_ father asked *me* to send a book to him.



**AGREEMENT: INDEFINITE PRONOUNS**

An *indefinite pronoun* is one that does not substitute for or refer to any specific noun; therefore, it is indefinite. Some indefinite pronouns are always singular, whereas others can be singular or plural in meaning. Look at the following lists.

## INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

| Always Singular | Singular or Plural |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| anybody         | all                |
| anyone          | any                |
| anything        | more               |
| each            | most               |
| either          | none               |
| every           | some               |
| everybody       |                    |
| everyone        |                    |
| neither         |                    |
| nobody          |                    |
| no one          |                    |
| one             |                    |
| somebody        |                    |
| someone         |                    |
| something       |                    |

Look at this example:

*Everyone* is going to the banquet with *his* or *her* date.

*Everyone* is the indefinite pronoun (and the antecedent), and it is singular. Consequently, the verb that goes with it must be singular, *is going*. And the pronouns referring to *everyone* must be singular, *his* or *her*.

Although *everyone* and *everybody* may seem plural, they are not. Try to remember that they end in *-one* and *-body* (singular ideas).

Many writers use *he* or *she*, *his* or *her*, *him* or *her* to refer to singular indefinite pronouns. Naturally, if you use a pronoun like *everyone* to refer to a woman, use *she*, or use *her*. If *everyone* refers specifically to a man, then use *he*, *his*, or *him*.

Look at the following sentences using indefinite pronouns which can be either singular or plural:

All of the employees go to their favorite restaurant.

The phrase *of the employees* indicates that *all* is plural because more than one employee is involved; therefore, the pronoun referring to *all* must be plural, *their*. Notice that the verb is also plural, *go*.

All of the cake has become dry in its pan.

The phrase *of the cake* indicates that *all* is singular because the sentence refers to only one cake; therefore, the pronoun referring to *all* must be singular, *its*. Notice that the verb is also singular, *has become*.



**EXERCISE 1** ► In the sentences below, provide the pronouns. Write the antecedents in the blanks.

|  | Antecedent       |
|--|------------------|
| <b>Example:</b> Everybody should protect <u>his or her</u> property.   | <u>everybody</u> |
| 1. Each is leaving _____ home early today.                             | _____            |
| 2. Anybody passing the test today can do well on _____ test next week. | _____            |
| 3. Most of the essays in this book have _____ good points.             | _____            |
| 4. Someone left _____ purse in my car.                                 | _____            |

5. Ramona put the book in \_\_\_\_\_ place on the shelf. \_\_\_\_\_
6. No one gave \_\_\_\_\_ permission for the procedure. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Each juror presented \_\_\_\_\_ argument. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Has anyone paid for \_\_\_\_\_ concert ticket yet? \_\_\_\_\_
9. One has to know \_\_\_\_\_ own mind. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Anything in Trudy's closet has \_\_\_\_\_ price tag still attached. \_\_\_\_\_



**EXERCISE 2** ► Correct any errors in pronoun reference in the sentences below. Put a *C* in the blank if the sentence has no errors.

**Example:** No one should cheat on <sup>his or her</sup>~~their~~ test.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Everyone answered the questions on his or her questionnaire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Each city has their own beautification program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Has anyone completed their history report?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. No one is sure if they will pass this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Some of the scientists submitted their resignations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. One is unsure of their future in this company.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Most of the students passed their exams.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Anyone on the street at this hour should have their head examined.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Anybody can write his own resume.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Everyone is here because they want to be.



**EXERCISE 3** ► Write your own sentences using the indefinite pronouns in parentheses as the antecedents in your sentences.

**Example:** (no one) *No one planned his or her trip before February.* \_\_\_\_\_

1. (everyone) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. (all) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. (someone) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. (nobody) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. (some) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## AGREEMENT: PRONOUNS REFERRING TO ANTECEDENTS JOINED BY *AND*

A pronoun referring to antecedents joined by *and* is plural. Look at these examples:

When *Della and Andy* returned, *they* were laughing with delight.

The *mother and daughter* posed for *their* picture to be taken.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ In the sentences below, provide the pronouns. Write the antecedents in the blanks.

|  | <b>Antecedent</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Example:</b> The boy and his horse are walking to the stable where <u>they</u> can rest.                  | <u>boy, horse</u> |
| 1. Camille and Karen are cousins, but _____ do not favor each other.   | _____             |
| 2. When Joel and I got married, _____ invited two hundred people to the wedding.                             | _____             |
| 3. Cycling and swimming are good sports because _____ have aerobic value.                                    | _____             |
| 4. Baked potatoes and carrots provide glucose release in the body after _____ have been consumed.            | _____             |
| 5. Jim and Rudy wrote a play about the Great Depression; _____ spent a year on the project.                  | _____             |
| 6. The black shoes and white socks look silly together because _____ clash.                                  | _____             |
| 7. When Linda and Charles arrive, I will give _____ a big hug.   | _____             |
| 8. After _____ were inscribed, the plaque and the pen set were awarded to Mr. Nash for ten years of service. | _____             |
| 9. The attorney and his partner stared at _____ client in disbelief.   | _____             |
| 10. Harvey and Nathan are driving to Aspen because _____ refused to go on the bus.                           | _____             |



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ Write sentences of your own with antecedents joined by *and*.

**Example:** The exercise bike and the rowing machine have their instructions attached.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**AGREEMENT: PRONOUNS REFERRING TO ANTECEDENTS JOINED BY OR, EITHER ... OR, OR NEITHER ... NOR**

Pronouns referring to antecedents joined by *or*, *either... or*, or *neither... nor* always agree with the antecedent nearer the verb. Look at the chart that follows.

**ANTECEDENTS JOINED BY OR, EITHER... OR, OR NEITHER ... NOR**

| Antecedents  | Pronoun Referring to Antecedent |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Both are singular.<br><b>Example:</b> <i>John or Mark</i> should have kept <i>his</i> textbook.  | Singular                        |
| Both are plural.<br><b>Example:</b> Either Jane's <i>neighbors</i> or Marsha's <i>friends</i> will lend Jack <i>their</i> skis.  | Plural                          |
| One is singular, and one is plural. The plural antecedent is nearer the verb.<br><b>Example:</b> Neither the <i>boy</i> nor the <i>girls</i> know <i>their</i> lines in the play.  | Plural                          |
| One is plural, and one is singular. The singular antecedent is nearer the verb.<br><b>Example:</b> Neither the <i>girls</i> nor the <i>boy</i> knows <i>his</i> lines in the play. | Singular                        |



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ In the sentences below, provide the pronouns. Then write the antecedents closest to the verbs.

|   | Antecedent     |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Example:</b> Either the dog or the hamster has <u>its</u> appeal as a pet for Molly. | <u>hamster</u> |
| 1. Either Sally or the night secretary will organize _____ personnel files.             | _____          |
| 2. Reggie or Walter should have spoken _____ mind.                                      | _____          |
| 3. Neither the tenants nor the landlord had _____ valuables stolen.                     | _____          |
| 4. Either the book or the magazines have _____ use as references.                       | _____          |
| 5. Peaches or apricots are delicious fresh from _____ branches.                         | _____          |

6. Either Myra or her sister will drive \_\_\_\_\_ car to the bank. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Either the tornado or the large hail does \_\_\_\_\_ damage quickly. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The wrestlers or the coach should not lose \_\_\_\_\_ temper. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Neither the credit unions nor the bank gave him \_\_\_\_\_ good credit rating. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The pears or the pineapples would taste good in \_\_\_\_\_ own juice. \_\_\_\_\_



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ Write your own sentences with antecedents joined by the conjunctions in parentheses.

**Example:** (or) *The children or the teacher will eat her lunch outdoors.* \_\_\_\_\_

1. (or) \_\_\_\_\_
2. (either ... or) \_\_\_\_\_
3. (neither .. nor) \_\_\_\_\_

## AGREEMENT: PRONOUNS REFERRING TO COLLECTIVE NOUNS

A *collective noun* has a singular form, but it refers to a group of people or things. Here is a partial list of collective nouns:

|           |        |
|-----------|--------|
| audience  | family |
| class     | group  |
| committee | jury   |
| crowd     | team   |

If a collective noun refers to a group acting as one unit, it is singular. Therefore, any pronoun referring to the collective noun should be singular too. Look at the example:

The *class* planned *its* field trip today.

The class is doing something as one unit, so class is a singular antecedent. The singular pronoun *its* must be used.

If a collective noun refers to members of a group acting separately, as individuals, it is plural. Therefore, any pronoun referring to the collective noun should be plural too. Look at the example:

The *class* has *their* blood pressures checked.

Each member of the class is acting individually—having individual blood pressures checked—so class is a plural antecedent. The plural pronoun *their* must be used.

*It* and *its* refer to singular collective nouns. *They* and *their* refer to plural collective nouns.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Supply the pronoun for each sentence below. Write the antecedent in the blank.

|  | <b>Antecedent</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Example:</b> The jury gave <u>its</u> verdict.  | <u>jury</u>       |
| 1. Ms. Nida's class is planning for _____ tour of the science museum.                        | _____             |
| 2. The government provides an annuity for some of _____ employees.                           | _____             |
| 3. A crowd gathered in the square; _____ was large and unruly.                               | _____             |
| 4. The student committee organized a luncheon for _____ members.                             | _____             |
| 5. The audience showed _____ approval with loud applause.                                    | _____             |
| 6. The team used a strategy which made _____ famous among football fans.                     | _____             |
| 7. The group of friends have gone _____ separate ways.                                       | _____             |
| 8. The faculty supported _____ individual department representatives to the faculty council. | _____             |



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ Correct any errors in pronoun reference in the sentences below. Put a C in the blank if the sentence has no error in pronoun reference.

- Example:** The government has <sup>its</sup>~~their~~ problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The swim team was at their best at the last competition.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The audience honored the speaker with its applause.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. My family took their vacation together this spring.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The electric company will raise their rates.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The army extolls the educational opportunities they offer to recruits.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The choir sang a medley of gospel songs from their record album.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The faculty planned an addition to their faculty council bylaws.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The choir sang the difficult cantata as well as they could.



**EXERCISE 3** ▶ Write your own sentences using the collective nouns in parentheses as your antecedents. First, use the noun as a singular antecedent; then use it as a plural antecedent.

- Example:** (orchestra)  
 Singular: *The orchestra gave its best performance.* \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plural: *The orchestra met their friends after the performance.* \_\_\_\_\_
1. (class) Singular: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plural: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. (family) Singular: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plural: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. (team) Singular: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plural: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### AGREEMENT: CLAUSES BEGINNING WITH RELATIVE PRONOUNS

*Who, that, and which* are known as *relative pronouns* because they relate to another word. Relative pronouns do not have different singular and plural forms.

If a dependent clause begins with a relative pronoun, you must look at the antecedent of the pronoun to determine if the other reference words should be singular or plural. Look at the following example:

Angela is a *person who* usually completes *her* assignments.

*Who* refers to *person*, a singular noun. Therefore, *her*, a singular pronoun, is used. Here is another example:

Students are *people who* usually complete *their* assignments.

*Who* refers to *people*, a plural noun. Therefore, *their*, a plural pronoun, is used.

If the sentence includes the words *one of*, the reference words are plural:

Craig is one of the *carpenters who* never leave a mess after *their* work is done.

*Who* refers to *carpenters*. Several carpenters do not leave a mess, and Craig is one of them. Consequently, the plural pronoun *their* is used.

If the sentence includes the words *the only one of*, the reference words are singular:

Jameson is the only one of those *doctors who* frequently visits *his* hospitalized patients.

*Who* refers to *doctors*. Among the doctors, the only one who frequently visits hospitalized patients is Jameson. Consequently, the singular pronoun *his* is used.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Circle the relative pronouns in the sentences below. Draw an arrow from each relative pronoun to the antecedent. Supply the correct pronoun in the blank.

**Example:** Sandberg and White are lawyers (who) try their cases in criminal courts.

- My sister is someone who always does \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas shopping early.
- This bedroom is the one that needs \_\_\_\_\_ ceiling repaired.
- Mrs. Archer is the only one of the librarians who gave up \_\_\_\_\_ weekend to work.
- Angelina is one of those people who like \_\_\_\_\_ coffee strong and black.
- The test is one which Alec passed because \_\_\_\_\_ was so easy.
- The clinic is the only one that offered \_\_\_\_\_ services until 9:00 P.m. each night.
- The advisors are the ones who administered the test to \_\_\_\_\_ advisees.
- He is one of those people who adapt to \_\_\_\_\_ environments quickly.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Complete the sentences below with your own words. You will be adding the rest of the dependent clause beginning with a relative pronoun.

**Example:** Gus is a person who *likes mountain climbing*. \_\_\_\_\_

1. She is the only one of the women who \_\_\_\_\_
2. Jean is a person who \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sam is one of those people who \_\_\_\_\_

## CONSISTENCY OF PERSON

*Consistency of person* means using the same person or personal pronoun in a sentence or paragraph. In particular, you must avoid confusing your audience by shifting from first person (*I, we*, and so on) or third person (*he, she, it, they*, and so on) to second person (*you*). For a review of person, refer to the section on personal pronouns in this chapter. Then look at these examples:

Inconsistent Person: If a *student* works hard, *you* can get a degree.

Consistent Person: If a *student* works hard, *he or she* can get a degree.

Consistent Person: If *students* work hard, *they* can get degrees.

Consistent Person: If *you* work hard, *you* can get a degree.

Here is a paragraph that begins in third person but occasionally lapses into second person. This inconsistent use of person can make the reading of a paragraph confusing. The inconsistencies have been underlined:

When one is thinking about changing jobs, you should consider several factors. First, one should look at salary. Will you be making more money? Will the salary include good benefits? Another consideration is how well one can adapt to a new work environment. Beginning a new job will cause some stress, of course, but the stress might be worth it if the job brings several advantages. Another factor for you to consider is changes in one's lifestyle that might occur. You might have to spend more time commuting or working overtime. One should carefully think about several factors before changing jobs.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Correct the inconsistencies of person in the sentences below. You may need to change verbs to agree with new subjects.

his or her

**Example:** Everyone should wash ~~your~~ clothes in cold water.

1. People in management positions know that you need to produce quality work.
2. Veronica treats me like a sister; it always makes you feel good.
3. A photographer can make the mundane interesting, so they often search for overlooked subjects.
4. The average woman has little time for relaxation; they are always busy.
5. I found several errors; you have let the accounting department know immediately.
6. After a student has selected his courses, you have to get an advisor's signature.

7. When a data processor has worked on a manuscript for a long time, they resent interruptions.
8. Nobody in the class seems sure of their revision skills.
9. A person with dyslexia can get help for their problem.
10. Every writer needs to have their purpose clearly in mind.

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# Troublesome Pronouns

## DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

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Some pronouns point to a thing or group of things; in other words, they demonstrate and, therefore, are called *demonstrative pronouns*.

### Demonstrative Pronouns

this  
that  
these  
those

Look at the following examples:

I bought *this* shirt. (*This* points out *shirt*.)

*That* is the book on sailing. (*That* points out *book*.)

*These* bananas are green. (*These* points out *bananas*.)

*Those* children are mine. (*Those* points out *children*.)

*This* and *that* refer to singular nouns (*shirt*, *book*). *These* and *those* refer to plural nouns (*bananas*, *children*).

*This* and *these* refer to something closer to the speaker, while *that* and *those* refer to something farther away from the speaker.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Circle the correct demonstrative pronoun in parentheses. You may need to use your dictionary to check the singular and plural forms of the nouns.

**Example:** (this, these) candle

1. (this, these) typewriter
2. (that, those) women
3. (this, these) job
4. (that, those) clerical errors
5. (this, these) dictionaries
6. (that, those) apple
7. (this, these) ceramic bowl
8. (that, those) seashells



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ Write your own sentences using the demonstrative pronouns in parentheses.

**Example:** (this) *This meal consists of vegetables and rice.* \_\_\_\_\_

1. (this) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. (this) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. (that) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. (that) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. (these) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. (these) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. (those) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. (those) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

*Reflexive pronouns* reflect back to the subject of the sentence. Look at the following reflexive pronouns, both singular and plural, in first, second, and third person.

### REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

| Singular       |   | Plural         |            |
|----------------|---|----------------|------------|
| first person:  | myself                                  | first person:  | ourselves  |
| second person: | yourself                                | second person: | yourselves |
| third person:  | himself<br>herself<br>oneself<br>itself | third person:  | themselves |

Look at the following example:

*You* might cut *yourself* with the knife.

The subject of the sentence is *you*, and the reflexive pronoun is *yourself*. The reflexive pronoun is used to show that the object of the action is the same as the subject. Here is another example:

*I* typed the report *myself*.

The subject of the sentence is *I*, and the reflexive pronoun is *myself*. The reflexive pronoun is used to give more emphasis to the subject. In other words, it intensifies the subject.

Be sure that you do not use a reflexive pronoun as the subject of a sentence.

**Incorrect:** Professor Mitchell and *myself* discussed the procedure.

**Correct:** Professor Mitchell and *I* discussed the procedure.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Add a reflexive pronoun to complete each of the sentences below.

**Example:** I tried to fix the lamp myself.

1. We prepared the inventory sheets \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Can you find the office \_\_\_\_\_?
3. James prefers balancing the checkbook \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I tried to change the tire \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The city employees evaluated \_\_\_\_\_ on a new form.
6. One can try to alleviate stress \_\_\_\_\_.
7. We revised the directions \_\_\_\_\_.
8. You can pay for the damage \_\_\_\_\_.



**EXERCISE 2** ► Write your own sentences using the reflexive pronouns in parentheses.

**Example:** (herself) She gave herself a manicure.

1. (myself) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. (yourself) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. (ourselves) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. (oneself) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. (themselves) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SUBJECTIVE, OBJECTIVE, POSSESSIVE CASE

Some pronouns have different forms for their different uses in a sentence. These differences in form are referred to as *case*. Study the cases of the following pronouns in first, second, and third person.

### PRONOUN CASE

|                | SINGULAR          |                  |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                | <b>Subjective</b> | <b>Objective</b> | <b>Possessive</b> |
| first person:  | I                 | me               | my                |
| second person: | you               | you              | your              |
| third person:  | he                | him              | his               |
|                | she               | her              | her               |
|                | it                | it               | its               |
|                | PLURAL            |                  |                   |
|                | <b>Subjective</b> | <b>Objective</b> | <b>Possessive</b> |
| first person:  | we                | us               | our               |
| second person: | you               | you              | your              |
| third person:  | they              | them             | their             |

The *subjective case* is used when a pronoun is the subject of an independent or dependent clause. Look at the example:

*She* drank a protein supplement.

*She is* the subject of the independent clause. Here is another example:

Lance resigned because *he* found a better job.

*He is* the subject of the dependent clause.

The subjective case is also used when a pronoun is a subject complement. A subject complement completes the sense of the subject and follows a linking verb. Look at the following example:

The scriptwriter was *he*.

The subject of the sentence is *scriptwriter*, and the subject complement is *he*.

The *objective case* is used when the pronoun is the object of a verb or the object of a preposition. Look at these examples:

Sylvia thanked *me* for the gift.

The object of the verb is *me*. The object of the verb in this sentence is also called the direct object.

The spicy food gave *him* heartburn.

The object of the verb is *him*. The object of the verb in this sentence is also called an indirect object because the words *to* or *for* are understood: *The spicy food gave to him heartburn.*

Here is an example with a prepositional phrase:

One of *them* is broken.

The object of the preposition is *them*.

The *possessive case* shows possession or ownership. The possessive case of a pronoun is usually used preceding a noun:

Paige needed *our* time sheets.

The possessive pronoun is *our*.

The following sentence includes all three cases:

| <b>Subjective</b> |      | <b>Objective</b> |     | <b>Possessive</b> |  |
|-------------------|------|------------------|-----|-------------------|--|
| I                 | gave | her              | his | business card.    |  |



**EXERCISE 1** ► Underline the pronouns in the following sentences. Then label each one with its case:

S = subjective

O = objective

P = possessive

Example:    **S**        **P**  
He sold his business yesterday.

1. She gave the reports to you this morning.
2. We barbecued chicken for our family reunion picnic.
3. Audrey told me a story about her father.
4. His hopes were shattered because he lost the election.
5. I saw you after class yesterday.
6. She loves tennis, but he dislikes it.
7. They sold his ranch for him.
8. The judge for their case was she.

## SPECIAL USES OF CASE

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You need to be familiar with the four special uses of the correct case of pronouns. If you do not use the proper pronoun case, you will detract from the effectiveness of your sentence structure. The four special uses occur when you have the following in your sentence:

1. A pronoun after *than* or *as* in a comparison  
**Example:** She is older than I.
2. The pronouns *who* or *whom* (*whoever* or *whomever*) in dependent clauses  
**Example:** John is the man who will answer the question.
3. Nouns or pronouns joined by *and* or *or*  
**Example:** Arnold and I are leaving now.
4. The plural pronoun *we* and *us* with a noun  
**Example:** We students admired our art teacher.

The first special use of case occurs with a pronoun after *than* or *as* in a comparison. Look at the following example:

**Example:** She is older than *I*.

The subjective case *I* is used. If you complete the comparison in your mind, the case becomes obvious: *She is older than I am old*. Here is another example:

The gift pleases you as much as *me*.

The objective case *me* is used. Again, try to complete the comparison in your mind: *The gift pleases you as much as it pleases me*.

The case of the pronoun can change the meaning of the sentence:

Amanda likes Mark more than *I*.

Since the subjective case *I* is used, the meaning of the sentence is *Amanda likes Mark more than I like Mark*. However, with the pronoun case changed, the meaning of the sentence changes:

Amanda likes Mark more than *me*.

Since the objective case *me* is used, the meaning of the sentence is *Amanda likes Mark more than she likes me*. Be sure that your sentence says what you want it to say.

The second special use of case occurs when you use the pronouns *who* or *whom* in dependent clauses. Look at the example:

John is the man *who* will answer the question.

The subjective case *who* is used. An easy test to use in finding the correct case is to rewrite the dependent clause with *who* or *whom* as a separate sentence and substitute either *he* or *him* for the *who* form.

*He will answer the question.*

Since the subjective form *he* makes sense in the substitution, *who* is correct in the dependent clause. Look at the next example:

John is the man *whom* we will ask to help us.

The objective case *whom* is used. The substitution is as follows:

We will ask *him* to help us.

The objective case *him* is used.

Remember that *him* and *whom* both end in *-m*, so they are both the same—objective case. The same principle applies to *whoever* and *whomever*.

The testing center gave the reading test to *whoever* asked to take it.

The subjective case *whoever* is used. The substitution is as follows:

*He* asked to take it.

Here is another example:

The best part is given to *whomever* the director selects.

The objective case *whomever* is used, as in this substitution:

The director selects *him*.

The third special use of case occurs when nouns or pronouns are joined by *and* or *or*. Here is an example:

Arnold and I are leaving now.

The subjective case *I* is used because it is part of the subject of the sentence. *Arnold and me are leaving now* would be incorrect. Here is another example:

My parents thanked Paul and *me*.

The objective case *me* is used because it is part of the object of the verb. *My parents thanked Paul and I* would be incorrect. Here is one more example:

The phone call is for me or *her*.

The objective case *her* is used because it is part of the object of the preposition. *The phone call is for me or she* would be incorrect.

As a test, omit the word before *and* or *or*. Then you can see that you would not write the following:

*Me* is leaving now.

My parents thanked *I*.

The phone call is for *she*.

The fourth special use of case occurs when you have the plural pronouns *we* and *us* with a noun. Look at the following example:

*We* students admired our art teacher.

The subjective case *we* is used because *students* is the subject of the sentence. Here is another example:

The art teacher was admired by *us* students.

The subjective case *us* is used because *students* is the object of the preposition.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Circle the correct pronoun after *than* or *as*.

**Example:** Burt has more money than (he, him).

1. I love reading poetry more than (they, them).
2. No one is as crazy as (he, him).
3. They expected more sympathy than (I, me).
4. The loud noise surprised us more than it surprised (they, them).
5. You would congratulate him sooner than you would (she, her).
6. Bess can swim better than (I, me).
7. He is always more nervous than (she, her).
8. Nobody is as happy as (they, them).

9. This diet is more appropriate for him than (I, me).
10. Bobby ate lunch as quickly as (he, him).



**EXERCISE 2** ▶ Circle *who* or *whom* (or *whoever* or *whomever*) in the sentences below.

**Example:** Adam is the little boy (who, whom) I babysit for on Friday nights.

1. The man (who, whom) is wearing the Marine uniform is my brother.
2. Children (who, whom) are encouraged to read usually do well in school.
3. Mr. Conners is the one (who, whom) reported the crime.
4. Roxanne is the person (who, whom) I gave the dinner for on Saturday night.
5. Everyone thought she was the one (who, whom) we had seen.
6. Give the candy to (whoever, whomever) wants it.
7. I know (who, whom) Beatrice married.
8. The prize goes to (whoever, whomever) the judges choose.



**EXERCISE 3** ▶ Circle the correct pronoun after *and* or *or*.

**Example:** The manager gave the work to Sharon and (I, me).

1. Kyle and (I, me) drove to Baja in the jeep.
2. Will you or (she, her) lock the office?
3. Lorna and (they, them) invested in several stocks.
4. The group included Ernest and (we, us).
5. The branch manager took Lee and (she, her) to dinner.
6. Someone wrote an anonymous letter to Dan and (I, me).
7. (Us, We) and our neighbors fertilized our lawns.
8. The coat belongs either to Rocky or to (he, him).
9. She realized that Gary and (I, me) were late for work.
10. The decision is up to me and (he, him).



**EXERCISE 4** ▶ Circle the correct plural pronoun.

**Example:** (We, Us) nurses work on the psychiatric ward.

1. (We, Us) workers demanded compensation.
2. Dr. Valdez explained the surgical procedure to (we, us) students.
3. (We, Us) dieters avoid pizza and ice cream.
4. (We, Us) actors do not like this stubborn director.
5. The tornado was intriguing to (we, us) amateur meteorologists.
6. (We, Us) gourmets prefer to cook with fresh produce.
7. The fresh snow was appreciated by (we, us) skiers.
8. (We, Us) collectors enjoyed looking at Hal's coins.
9. The problem for (we, us) salespeople was a lack of time.
10. She gave (we, us) visitors a warm welcome.

**CHAPTER  
REVIEW  
EXERCISE**

Correct any error of pronoun case in the sentences below.

**Example:** Fred has fewer college credits than ~~me~~.<sup>1</sup>

1. She is taller than me.
2. Wanda is the one whom called me on my birthday.
3. I and them are cousins.
4. Does the envelope belong to Trudy or I?
5. Us parents worry about our children's education.
6. No one is as conscientious as them.
7. The report is for me rather than she.
8. The problem must be solved by Harriet and he.

## VAGUE PRONOUN REFERENCE

It is important that pronouns clearly refer to their antecedents; otherwise, your sentences will be vague or unclear. Be particularly careful when using *it*, *they*, *this*, and *that*.

**Vague:** In the auditorium, *it* says the two back rows are off limits. (Who says?)

**Clear:** In the auditorium, *the sign* says the two back rows are off limits.

**Vague:** At the service center, *they* told me I would have to wait an hour for my car to be repaired, (Who is *they*?)

**Clear:** At the service center, *the service manager* told me I would have to wait an hour for my car to be repaired.

**Vague:** In the first chapter of the book, *it* says that freewriting is a good method to use in developing ideas. (Who says?)

**Clear:** In the first chapter of the book, *the author* says that freewriting is a good method to use in developing ideas.

**Vague:** The housekeeper removed the mattress pad from the mattress and replaced *it*. (What was replaced?)

**Clear:** The housekeeper replaced *the mattress pad* after removing it from the mattress.

**Vague:** Carol knew everything about Professor Reeser's eccentricities in class, and she worked as his secretary for seven years. *This* gave her insight into the reason he retired early. (What gave Carol insight?)

**Clear:** Carol knew everything about Professor Reeser's eccentricities in class, and she worked as his secretary for seven years. *Her knowledge and experience* gave her insight into the reason he retired early.

**Vague:** I recommended a financial advisor to Anita because she inherited a great deal of money. *That* is why she made an appointment with him today. (Why did Anita make an appointment?)

**Clear:** I recommended a financial advisor to Anita because she inherited a great deal of money. *Because of my recommendation*, she made an appointment with him today.



**EXERCISE 1** ▶ Revise the vague pronoun references in the sentences below.

**Example:** They have tornadoes during the spring months in several states.

*Tornadoes occur during the spring months in several states.*

1. In the newspaper, it says public television needs more funding.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The instructor could tell I knew nothing about physics. That was obvious.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. They told me to go from the personnel office to the financial aid office. This is why I was late.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The lecture was long and boring; I found it confusing.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Ellie was supposed to call Frank; however, Frank was never home. It caused hurt feelings.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The optometrists would recommend these contacts, but they are unavailable.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. At the gun show, they sold antique weapons for exorbitant prices.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Mirza tried to explain the problem so that his friends could help him. It was impossible.  
\_\_\_\_\_



**REPETITIOUS PRONOUNS**

Do not repeat a pronoun immediately after its antecedent. Use either the pronoun or the antecedent.

**Repetitious:** The *mayor*, *he* said the Myriad Gardens are completed.

**Revised:** The *mayor said* the Myriad Gardens are completed.

**Revised:** *He* said the Myriad Gardens are completed.



**EXERCISE 1** ► Revise the sentences below by eliminating any repetitious pronouns.

**Example:** Joan, she described her mother as loving and kind.

*Joan described her mother as loving and kind.*

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1. The team members, they needed another practice session.

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2. The toys, they were too expensive.

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3. The counselor, he said that I should take a study skills class.

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4. My parents' apricot trees, they are beautiful in April.

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5. The tour guide, he made the children laugh.

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