

## PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT HANDOUT

Pronouns are words that take the place of names and nouns (persons, places, things). Here are all the most common pronouns classified by person and case.

	<b>SUBJECTIVE Pronoun</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE Pronoun</b>	<b>REFLEXIVE Pronoun</b>	<b>POSSESSIVE Pronoun*</b>	<b>POSSESSIVE Adjective*</b>
<b>SINGULAR</b>					
1st person	I	me	myself	mine	my
2nd person	you	you	yourself	yours	your
3rd person	he	him	himself	his	his
	she	her	herself	hers	her
	it	it	itself	its	its
<b>PLURAL</b>					
1st person	we	us	ourselves	ours	our
2nd person	you	you	yourselves	yours	your
3rd person	they	them	themselves	theirs	their

\*Some grammar books and instructors refer to the "possessive adjective" as the "possessive pronoun." We will include the possessive adjectives in this study of pronoun-antecedent agreement.

All pronouns must agree in number--singular (one) or plural (more than one)--and person--(first, second, third)--with the names and nouns that they are replacing. The names and nouns that they are replacing are referred to as "antecedents."

One common error in pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when the antecedent is an indefinite singular pronoun such as "anyone/anybody," "someone/somebody," "no one/nobody," and "everyone/everybody."

In the sentence: Mrs. Smith returned the student's umbrella to\_\_\_\_\_.

The speaker knows that the antecedent is singular ("student") but does not know if the antecedent is masculine (in which case the object pronoun would be "him") or feminine ("in which case the object pronoun would be "her"). This is why many people would substitute the pronoun "them," and they would be **WRONG!**

Mrs. Smith returned the student's umbrella to them. **(WRONG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)**

This sentence however is not correct because "student" is singular and "them" is plural. The sentence, in order to be correct, must be written:

Mrs. Smith returned the student's umbrella to **him**.

**OR**

Mrs. Smith returned the student's umbrella to **her**.

**OR**

Mrs. Smith should return the student's umbrella to **him or her**.

Look at the following sentence.

Everyone should pack\_\_\_\_\_own lunch for the trip.

The antecedent (which is also the subject of the sentence, too) is "everyone" which is third person singular. If "everyone" refers to a pack of boy scouts, the possessive adjective would be "his." If "everyone" refers to girl scouts the possessive adjective would be "her." If "everyone" refers to both boys and girls or if the speaker does not know the gender of "everyone, he or she should use "his/her" or "his or her."

Everyone should pack **his or her** own lunch.

In this sentence, the third person singular possessive adjectives "his" and "her" agree in number and person with "everyone."

## PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT PRACTICE EXERCISE

*Fill in the correct pronoun or pronouns in each sentence.*

1. The boys opened\_\_\_\_\_backpacks at the campsite.
2. Students should always try to do\_\_\_\_\_work on time.
3. You are expected to have\_\_\_\_\_papers finished by tomorrow.
4. The children were happy because\_\_\_\_\_have no school tomorrow.
5. Some people expect to have everything done for\_\_\_\_\_.
6. We often wish that\_\_\_\_\_lived nearer to you.
7. Everyone knew that\_\_\_\_\_would enjoy the concert.
8. Someone left\_\_\_\_\_textbook on the bus.
9. Mary and Ellen rode\_\_\_\_\_bicycles to work last summer.
10. \_\_\_\_\_must always do your work carefully.

### ANSWER KEY

1. their
2. their
3. your
4. they
5. them
6. we
7. he    he or she    he/she
8. his    his or her    his/her
9. their
10. You