

3 Agreement

PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

A pronoun must have a clear noun to which it refers. This noun is known as the **antecedent**. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number (*singular or plural*) and gender (*masculine, feminine, or neuter*).

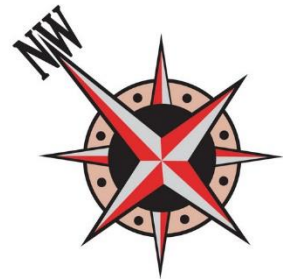
Ex: Robbie wanted his blankie and cried until his mom found it.

Ex: The soldiers polished their boots for the parade.

Many of the same rules that govern subject-verb agreement (see handout #2) also apply to pronoun-antecedent agreement.

Reminders:

1. A compound antecedent joined by the conjunction AND takes a plural pronoun.
Ex: Fortunately, Kim and Kanye did not name their second baby directionally.
2. After a compound antecedent joined by OR, NOR, EITHER...OR, NEITHER...NOR, the pronoun agrees with the part of the antecedent nearest to the pronoun.
Ex: Neither the poodle nor the collies have had their summer haircuts.
Ex: Either the football players or the coach has his schedule confused.
3. The words EACH, EVERY, EITHER, NEITHER, ONE, EVERYONE, EVERYBODY, NO ONE, NOBODY, ANYONE, ANYBODY, SOMEONE, and SOMEBODY are referred to by a singular noun.
Ex: Every one of our Presidents has done his best to lead our country effectively.*
4. A phrase modifying the antecedent does not change its number.
Ex: The woman walking with her five children happily ate her ice cream.
5. A collective noun takes a singular pronoun when the members of the group are considered as a unit but takes a plural pronoun when the members are considered as individuals.
Ex: The jury reached its verdict quickly. (One verdict which they reached as a group.)
Ex: The jury took their seats in the courtroom. (Individual seats for each member of the jury.)



*This example sentence will remain valid until such time as a woman becomes president of the United States, in which case we will be stuck with using either the awkward “his or her best” or entirely rewriting the sentence as “All of our Presidents have done their best to lead our country effectively.” This points to the difficulty of finding the appropriate pronoun with an indefinite antecedent. Usually, it is best to rewrite the sentence.

This also brings up the use of the singular “they,” such as in the sentence “Someone left their book in the classroom.” This use of “they” is still generally considered too informal for classroom papers. However, the singular use of “they” is appropriate for those who choose it as a gender designation. For more clarification on this issue, please talk to your professor.