



PRONOUN/ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

A pronoun should agree with its antecedent, the noun for which the pronoun stands, in number and gender. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun should be singular; if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun should be plural.

Singular Antecedent:

The girl wanted her own way.

Plural Antecedent:

The girls wanted their own way.

Antecedents such as each, anyone, everybody, and someone used as subjects require singular pronouns. If a collective noun is understood as a unit, it takes a singular pronoun; if it is understood in terms of its individual members, it takes a plural pronoun.

Singular Antecedent:

The band started to play its first number.

(The band as a unit is playing the same song).

Plural Antecedent:

The band agreed to pay for their own uniforms.

(The individual members came to an agreement).

A plural pronoun is used to refer to singular antecedents joined by “and.” A singular pronoun is used to refer to singular antecedents joined by “or” or “nor.” If one of the antecedents is singular and the other is plural, the pronoun should agree in number with the antecedent that is nearer.

Singular antecedents joined by “and”:

Mary and Martha read their books.

Singular antecedents joined by “or” or “nor”:

Either Jack or Joe must give up his prize.

Combination of singular and plural antecedents:

Neither the coach nor the players flagged in their desire.

Directions: For the following sentences, choose the correct form of the pronoun.

Each of the members decided to do it (his, their) own way.

A tennis player tries to improve (her, their) swing.

The professor and the students paid (his, their) own expenses.

The moon and the stars cast (its, their) brilliance upon us.

The society [considered as a unit] decided to reimburse (its, their) members.

Everyone has (his, their) rights.

Neither the supervisor nor her assistant could make up (her, their) mind.

The band [considered as individuals] donned (its, their) uniforms.

Either Nancy or Ellen will lose (her, their) advantage.

Somebody out there will give me (his, their) assistance.

Inconveniences and disease wreaked (its, their) havoc.

A trial judge must decide the innocence of (his, their) litigants.

The labor union members wanted to control (its, their) working hours.

Anyone should have the right to change (her, their) mind.

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