



Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement



❖ What is a **pronoun**?

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun or refers to a noun.

❖ What is an **antecedent**?

An antecedent is the word that the pronoun refers to.

For example:

A sentence without pronouns: “Isabella drove to school in Isabella’s car.”

A sentence with pronouns: “Isabella drove to school in her car.”

The *antecedent* in this sentence is Isabella, because the pronoun “her” refers to Isabella.

❖ What is **pronoun-antecedent agreement**?

Pronoun-antecedent agreement is when pronouns agree with the antecedent in terms of: person (quality of the being—first, second, or third person), number (in terms of singular or plural form), and gender (masculine or feminine).

Person pronoun-antecedent agreement:

- **Incorrect Sentence:** In order for a person to receive an A in the course, you must attend all of the class meetings.

This is incorrect, because the pronoun does not match the antecedent. “Person” is in the 3rd person and “you” is in the 2nd person.

- **Correct Sentence:** In order for a person to receive an A in the course, he or she must attend all of the class meetings.

Or: In order for a person to receive an A in the course, they must attend all of the class meetings.

This sentence containing “person” and “he or she” has pronoun-antecedent agreement in the 3rd person. Additionally, “they” is a pro-noun that is gender neutral.

Gender pronoun-antecedent agreement:

- **Incorrect Sentence:** If anyone misses more than three classes, he will automatically receive an Incomplete in the course.

This sentence is incorrect, because there is not a gender agreement between the antecedent “anyone” and the pronoun “he.” This sentence favors the male gender over the female gender.

- **Correct Sentence:** If anyone misses more than three classes, he or she will automatically receive an Incomplete in the course.

Or: If anyone misses more than three classes, they will automatically receive an Incomplete in the course.

This sentence is correct, because using both “he” and “she” shows agreement with the antecedent “anyone.” Additionally, “they” is a pro-noun that is gender neutral.

The following chart is a list of some pronouns and their form as used in a sentence, for your reference:

	Subject		Object		Possessive	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First Person	I	we	me	us	my, mine	our, ours
Second Person	you	you	you	you	your, yours	your, yours
Third Person	he	they	him	them	his	their, theirs
	she	they	her	them	her, hers	their, theirs
	it	they	it	them	It, its	their, theirs
	they	they	them	them	theirs	theirs

The following resources were consulted in the design of this handout:

Escalas, Maggie. “Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement.” *Literacy Education Online*. October 5, 1999. The Write Place, St. Cloud State University. 20 January 2009. <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/pronante.html>.

Harris, Muriel. *Prentice Hall Reference Guide to Grammar and Usage*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006.

“Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement.” *OWL*. 2004. The Learning Center, D’Youville College. 20 January 2009. http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/agreement_pa.htm.

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