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Part A

Defining Pronouns and Antecedents

Pronouns take the place of or refer to nouns, other pronouns, or phrases. The word that the pronoun refers to is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun.

1. *Eric* ordered *baked chicken* because *it* is *his* favorite dish.
2. *Simone and Lee* painted *their* room.
3. *I* like *camping in the woods* because *it* gives *me* a chance to be alone with *my* thoughts.

- In sentence 1, *it* refers to the antecedent *baked chicken*, and *his* refers to the antecedent *Eric*.
- In sentence 2, *their* refers to the plural antecedent *Simone and Lee*.
- In sentence 3, *it* refers to the antecedent *camping in the woods*. This antecedent is a whole phrase. *Me* and *my* refer to the pronoun antecedent *I*.

PRACTICE 1 In each sentence, a pronoun is circled. Write the pronoun first and then its antecedent, as shown in the example.

Example

Have you ever wondered why we exchange rings in our wedding ceremonies?

our we

1. When a man buys a wedding ring, he follows an age-old tradition.
2. Rich Egyptian grooms gave their brides gold rings five thousand years ago.
3. To Egyptian couples, the ring represented eternal love; it was a circle without beginning or end.
4. By Roman times, gold rings had become more affordable, so ordinary people could also buy them.
5. Still, many a Roman youth had to scrimp to buy his bride a ring.
6. The first bride to slip a diamond ring on her finger lived in Venice about five hundred years ago.
7. The Venetians knew that setting a diamond in a ring was an excellent way of displaying its beauty.
8. Nowadays, a man and a woman exchange rings to symbolize the equality of their relationship.

Part B

Making Pronouns and Antecedents Agree

A pronoun must *agree* with its antecedent in number and person.*

1. When *Tom* couldn't find *his* pen, *he* asked to borrow mine.
2. The three *sisters* wanted to start *their* own business.

- In sentence 1, *Tom* is the antecedent of *his* and *he*. Since *Tom* is singular and masculine, the pronouns referring to *Tom* are also singular and masculine.
- In sentence 2, *sisters* is the antecedent of *their*. Since *sisters* is plural, the pronoun referring to *sisters* must also be plural.

* For more work on pronoun agreement, see Chapter 20, "Revising for Consistency and Parallelism," Part B.

As you can see from these examples, making pronouns agree with their antecedents is usually easy. However, three special cases can be tricky.

1. Indefinite Pronouns

anybody
anyone
everybody
everyone
nobody
no one
one
somebody
someone

Each of these words is **singular**. Any pronoun that refers to one of them must also be singular: *he, him, his, she, or her*.

3. *Anyone* can quit smoking if *he* or *she* wants to.

4. *Everybody* should do *his* or *her* best to keep the reception area uncluttered.

- *Anyone* and *everybody* require the singular pronouns *he, she, his, and her*.

In the past, writers used *he* or *him* to refer to both men and women. Now, however, many writers use *he* or *she*, *his* or *her*, or *him* or *her*. Of course, if *everyone* or *someone* is a woman, use *she* or *her*; if *everyone* or *someone* is a man, use *he* or *him*. For example:

5. *Someone* left *her* new dress in a bag on the sofa.

6. *Everyone* is wearing *his* new tie.

PRACTICE 2 Fill in the correct pronoun and circle its antecedent. Make sure each pronoun agrees in number and person with its antecedent.

1. Anyone can become a good cook if _____ tries.
2. Someone dropped _____ lipstick behind the bookcase.
3. No one in the mixed doubles let _____ guard down for a minute.
4. Everybody wants _____ career to be rewarding.
5. Everyone is entitled to _____ full pension.
6. Mr. Hernow will soon be here, so please get _____ contract ready.
7. One should wear a necktie that doesn't clash with _____ suit.
8. The movie theater was so cold that nobody took off _____ coat.

2. Special Singular Antecedents

each (of) . . .	} Each of these constructions is singular . Any pronoun that refers to one of them must also be singular.*
either (of) . . .	
neither (of) . . .	
every one (of) . . .	
one (of) . . .	

7. *Neither* of the two men paid for *his* ticket to the wrestling match.

8. *Each* of the houses has *its* own special charm.

- The subject of sentence 7 is the singular *neither*, not *men*; therefore, the singular masculine pronoun *his* is required.
- The subject of sentence 8 is the singular *each*, not the plural *houses*; therefore, the singular pronoun *its* is required.

PRACTICE 3 Fill in the correct pronoun and circle its antecedent. Make sure each pronoun agrees in number and person with its antecedent.

1. Each of the men wanted to be _____ own boss.
2. One of the saleswomen left _____ sample case on the counter.
3. Every one of the colts has a white star on _____ forehead.
4. Neither of the actors knew _____ lines by heart.
5. Neither of the dentists had _____ office remodeled.
6. Each of these arguments has _____ flaws and _____ strengths.
7. Every one of the jazz bands had _____ own distinctive style.
8. Either of these telephone answering machines will work very well if _____ is properly cared for.

3. Collective Nouns

Collective nouns represent a group of people but are usually considered **singular**. They usually take singular pronouns.

9. The *jury* reached *its* decision in three hours.

10. The debating *team* is well known for *its* fighting spirit.

* For more work on prepositional phrases, see Chapter 24, "The Simple Sentence," Part B.

- In sentence 9, *jury* is a collective noun. Although it has several members, the jury acts as a unit—as one. Therefore, the antecedent *jury* takes the singular pronoun *its*.
- In sentence 10, why does the collective noun *team* take the singular pronoun *its*?

Here is a partial list of collective nouns:

Common Collective Nouns		
class	family	panel
college	flock	school
committee	government	society
company	group	team
faculty	jury	tribe

PRACTICE 4 Read each sentence carefully for meaning. Circle the antecedent and then fill in the correct pronoun.

1. My family gave me all _____ support when I went back to school.
2. The government should reexamine _____ domestic policy.
3. The college honored _____ oldest graduate with a reception.
4. Eco-Wise has just begun to market a new pollution-free detergent that _____ is proud of.
5. The panel will soon announce _____ recommendations to the hospital.
6. The two teams gave _____ fans a real show.
7. The jury deliberated for six days before _____ reached a verdict.
8. After touring the Great Pyramid, the class headed back to Cairo in _____ air-conditioned bus.

Part C

Referring to Antecedents Clearly

A pronoun must refer *clearly* to its antecedent. Avoid vague, repetitious, or ambiguous pronoun reference.

1. Vague pronoun:	At the box office, <i>they</i> said that tickets were no longer available.
2. Revised:	{ The cashier at the box office said . . . or At the box office, I was told . . .
3. Revised:	

- In sentence 1, who is *they*? *They* does not clearly refer to an antecedent.
- In sentence 2, *the cashier* replaces *they*.
- In sentence 3, the problem is avoided by a change of language.*

4. Repetitious pronoun	In the article, <i>it</i> says that Tyrone was a boxer.
5. Revised:	{ The article says that . . . or It says that . . .
6. Revised:	

- In sentence 4, *it* merely repeats *article*, the antecedent preceding it.
- Use either the pronoun or its antecedent, but not both.

7. Ambiguous pronoun:	Mr. Tedesco told his son that <i>his</i> car had a flat tire.
8. Revised:	Mr. Tedesco told his son that the younger man's car had a flat tire.
9. Revised:	Mr. Tedesco told his son Paul that Paul's car had a flat tire.

- In sentence 7, *his* could refer either to Mr. Tedesco or to his son.

PRACTICE 5 Revise the following sentences, removing vague, repetitious, or ambiguous pronoun references. Make the pronoun references clear and specific.

1. In this book it says that hundreds of boys are injured each year copying wrestling stunts they see on TV.

Revised: _____

2. On the radio they warned drivers that the Interstate Bridge was closed.

* For more work on using exact language, see Chapter 22, "Revising for Language Awareness," Part A.

Revised: _____

3. Sandra told her friend that she shouldn't have turned down the promotion.

Revised: _____

4. In North Carolina they raise tobacco.

Revised: _____

5. The moving van struck a lamppost; luckily, no one was injured, but it was badly damaged.

Revised: _____

6. Professor Grazel told his parrot that he had to stop chewing telephone cords.

Revised: _____

7. On the news, it said that more Americans than ever are turning to non-traditional medicine.

Revised: _____

8. Keiko is an excellent singer, yet she has never taken a lesson in it.

Revised: _____

9. Vandalism was once so out of control at the local high school that they stole sinks and lighting fixtures.

Revised: _____

10. Rosalie's mother said she was glad she had decided to become a paralegal.

Revised: _____

Part D

Special Problems of Case

Personal pronouns take different forms depending on how they are used in a sentence. Pronouns can be **subjects**, **objects**, or **possessives**.

Pronouns used as **subjects** are in the **subjective case**:

1. *He* and *I* go snowboarding together.
2. The peaches were so ripe that *they* fell from the trees.

- *He*, *I*, and *they* are in the subjective case.

Pronouns that are **objects of verbs** or **prepositions** are in the **objective case**. Pronouns that are **subjects of infinitives** are also in the **objective case**:

3. A sudden downpour soaked *her*. (object of verb)
4. Please give this card to *him*. (object of preposition)
5. We want *them* to leave right now. (subject of infinitive)

- *Her*, *him*, and *them* are in the objective case.

Pronouns that **show ownership** are in the **possessive case**:

6. The carpenters left *their* tools on the windowsill.
7. This flower has lost *its* brilliant color.

- *Their* and *its* are in the possessive case.

Pronoun Case Chart

Singular	Subjective	Objective	Possessive
1st person	I	me	my (mine)
2nd person	you	you	your (yours)
3rd person	he	him	his (his)
	she	her	her (hers)
	it	it	its (its)
	who	whom	whose
	whoever	whomever	

(continued)

Pronoun Case Chart

(continued)

Plural	Subjective	Objective	Possessive
1st person	we	us	our (ours)
2nd person	you	you	your (yours)
3rd person	they	them	their (theirs)

Using the correct case is usually fairly simple, but three problems require special care.

1. Case in Compound Constructions

A **compound construction** consists of two nouns, two pronouns, or a noun and a pronoun joined by *and*. Make sure that the pronouns in a compound construction are in the correct case.

8. *Serge and I* went to the pool together.
9. Between *you and me*, this party is a bore.

- In sentence 8, *Serge and I* are subjects.
- In sentence 9, *you and me* are objects of the preposition *between*.

Never use *myself* as a substitute for either *I* or *me* in compound constructions.

PRACTICE 6 Determine the case required by each sentence, and circle the correct pronoun.

1. (He, Him) and Harriet plan to enroll in the police academy.
2. A snowdrift stood between (I, me) and the subway entrance.
3. Tony used the software and then returned it to Barbara and (I, me, myself).
4. The reporter's questions caught June and (we, us) off guard.
5. By noon, Julio and (he, him) had already cleaned the garage and mowed the lawn.
6. These charts helped (she, her) and (I, me) with our statistics homework.
7. Professor Woo gave Diane and (she, her) extra time to finish the geology final.
8. Between you and (I, me), I have always preferred country music.

2. Case in Comparisons

Pronouns that complete comparisons may be in the subjective, objective, or possessive case:

10. His son is as stubborn as *he*. (subjective)
11. The cutbacks will affect you more than *her*. (objective)
12. This essay is better organized than *mine*. (possessive)

To decide on the correct pronoun, simply complete the comparison mentally and then choose the pronoun that naturally follows:

13. She trusts him more than I . . . (trust him).
14. She trusts him more than . . . (she trusts) . . . me.

- Note that in sentences 13 and 14, the case of the pronoun in the comparison can change the meaning of the entire sentence.

PRACTICE 7 Circle the correct pronoun.

1. Your hair is much shorter than (she, her, hers).
2. We tend to assume that others are more self-confident than (we, us).
3. She is just as funny as (he, him).
4. Is Hanna as trustworthy as (he, him)?
5. Although they were both research scientists, he received a higher salary than (she, her).
6. I am not as involved in this project as (they, them).
7. Sometimes we become impatient with people who are not as quick to learn as (we, us).
8. Michael's route involved more overnight stops than (us, our, ours).

3. Use of *Who* (or *Whoever*) and *Whom* (or *Whomever*)

Who and *whoever* are in the subjective case. *Whom* and *whomever* are in the objective case.

15. *Who* is at the door?
 16. For *whom* is that gift?
 17. *Whom* is that gift for?

- In sentence 15, *who* is the subject.
- The same question is written two ways in sentences 16 and 17. In both, *whom* is the object of the preposition *for*.

Sometimes, deciding on *who* or *whom* can be tricky:

18. I will give the raise to *whoever* deserves it.
 19. Give it to *whomever* you like.

- In sentence 18, *whoever* is the subject in the clause *whoever deserves it*.
- In sentence 19, *whomever* is the object in the clause *whomever you like*.

If you have trouble deciding on *who* or *whom*, change the sentence to eliminate the problem.

20. I prefer working with people *whom* I don't know as friends.
 or
 I prefer working with people I don't know as friends.

PRACTICE 8 Circle the correct pronoun.

1. (Who, Whom) will deliver the layouts to the ad agency?
2. To (who, whom) are you speaking?
3. (Who, Whom) prefers hiking to skiing?
4. For (who, whom) are those boxes piled in the corner?
5. The committee will award the scholarship to (whoever, whomever) it chooses.
6. (Who, Whom) do you wish to invite to the open house?
7. At (who, whom) did the governor fling the cream pie?
8. I will hire (whoever, whomever) can use a computer and speak Korean.

Part E

Using Pronouns with *-Self* and *-Selves*

Pronouns with *-self* or *-selves* can be used in two ways—as reflexives or as intensives.

A reflexive pronoun indicates that someone did something to himself or herself:

1. My daughter Miriam felt very grown up when she learned to dress *herself*.

- In sentence 1, Miriam did something to *herself*; she *dressed herself*.

An intensive pronoun emphasizes the noun or pronoun it refers to:

2. Anthony *himself* was surprised at how relaxed he felt during the interview.

- In sentence 2, *himself* emphasizes that Anthony—much to his surprise—was not nervous at the interview.

The following chart will help you choose the correct reflexive or intensive pronoun.

Antecedent	Reflexive or Intensive Pronoun
Singular	I myself
	you yourself
	he himself
	she herself
	it itself
Plural	we ourselves
	you yourselves
	they themselves

Note that in the plural *-self* is changed to *-selves*.

- **Be careful:** Do not use reflexives or intensives as substitutes for the subject of a sentence.

Incorrect: Harry and *myself* will be there on time.

Correct: Harry and *I* will be there on time.

PRACTICE 9 Fill in the correct reflexive or intensive pronoun. Be careful to make pronouns and antecedents agree.

1. Though he hates to cook, André _____ sautéed the mushrooms.
2. Rhoda found _____ in a strange city with only the phone number of a cousin whom she had not seen for years.
3. Her coffee machine automatically turns _____ on in the morning and off in the evening.
4. The librarian and I rearranged the children's section _____.
5. When it comes to horror films, I know that you consider _____ an expert.
6. They _____ didn't care if they arrived on time or not.
7. After completing a term paper, I always buy _____ a little gift to celebrate.
8. Larry _____ was surprised at how quickly he grew to like ancient history.

PRACTICE 10 REVIEW

Proofread the following essay for pronoun errors. Then correct the pronoun error above the line, in any way you choose.

The Many Lives of Jackie Chan

(1) Few movie stars can claim a career as unusual as him. (2) For one thing, Jackie Chan performs his death-defying stunts himself. (3) Although he was a huge star in Asia for more than twenty years, fame eluded him in the United States until recently.

(4) Chan was born in Hong Kong in 1954. (5) Because him and his parents were so poor, he was sent to live and study at the Peking Opera School. (6) There, they trained him in acting, dancing, singing, sword fighting, and kung fu. (7) When the school closed in 1971, their lessons paid off for Chan in an unexpected way.

(8) Chan worked as a stuntman and fight choreographer and landed acting roles in several films, including Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon*. (9) Lee, he died in

1973, and Chan was the natural choice to fill Lee's shoes. (10) In several films, Chan tried to imitate Lee, but the films were unsuccessful. (11) In 1978, however, Chan came up with the idea of turning Lee's tough style into comedy. (12) *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Drunken Master* were hilarious hits; it established "kung fu comedy." (13) Jackie Chan became one of Hong Kong's most popular stars.

(14) However, Hollywood directors did not appreciate Chan as a stuntman, actor, comedian, director, and scriptwriter all in one, and its early American films flopped. (15) Chan understood his own strengths better than them. (16) He returned to Hong Kong, but him and his fans always believed he could make a U.S. comeback. (17) This happened when *Rumble in the Bronx*, China's most popular film ever, was dubbed in English. (18) Finally, they began to appreciate this manic, bruised, and battered action hero who films were refreshingly nonviolent. (19) Since then, Chan's U.S. films, like *Rush Hour*, *Rush Hour 2*, and *Highbinder*, are being received almost as well as its Hong Kong counterparts.



Exploring Online

http://webster.commnet.edu/cgi-shl/quiz.pl/pronouns_add1.htm
Interactive pronoun quiz.