

## Exercises for Tutorial 5. Pronoun Agreement

**Principle I: Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in number.**

### Exercise 1

**Instructions:** In the following sentences, put brackets around each pronoun and underline its antecedent. Then, using Principle I, correct any pronouns that do not agree in number with their antecedents. Remember that pronouns can come *before* or *after* their antecedents. The first one has been done for you. *Type, write, or copy-paste each sentence into its answer box. Then add the brackets and underline. Make any needed corrections after the bracketed word(s) and use **bold** for the corrections.*

1. My children are happy when [their] grandmother gives it brownies.

My children are happy when [their] grandmother gives [it] **them** brownies.

*“Children” is the antecedent for the pronouns [their] and [it]. “Children” is plural. Since the pronoun, [their] is plural, that pronoun agrees in number with its antecedent. Therefore, the first pronoun, [their] is correct. However, the second pronoun, [it] is singular. It does not agree with its plural antecedent, “children.” You must change [it] to [them] so that the second pronoun matches its antecedent.*

2. Even though Einstein carefully explained his theories, some readers are still confused by it.

3. A writer often depends on their childhood memories when creating characters for a novel.

4. A student attending Mills College, an all-women's college, should have no fears about their future.

5. When their stock fell below ten dollars, the dot-com company filed for bankruptcy.

6. A person left their car in our driveway last night.

**Principle II: When an indefinite pronoun is the antecedent, you should always use a singular pronoun.**

## Exercise 2

*Instructions:* In the following sentences, put brackets around each pronoun and underline its antecedent. Then, using Principle II, correct any pronouns that do not agree in number with their antecedents. The first one has been done for you. *Type, write, or copy-paste each sentence into its answer box. Then add the brackets and underline. Make any needed corrections after the bracketed word(s) and use **bold** for the corrections.*

1. Each of my brothers needs to pay their tuition by the beginning of August.

Each of my brothers needs to pay [their] **his** tuition by the beginning of August.

*“Each” is the indefinite-pronoun antecedent for the plural pronoun [their]. According to Principle II, singular pronouns should be used for antecedents that are indefinite pronouns. Therefore, the plural pronoun [their] should be changed to the singular pronoun [his].*

2. Neither of the Bush daughters is attending their father’s alma mater, Yale University.

3. Each of the fans cheered as they watched the Giants run onto the field.

4. Don was furious that someone left their car in our driveway last night.

5. Everybody needs adequate time to reflect on their life.

**Principle III:** A pronoun should agree in person with its antecedent.

### Exercise 3

**Instructions:** In the following sentences, there are errors in pronoun agreement. Using Principle III, correct any pronouns that do not agree in person with their antecedents. The first one has been done for you. *Type, write, or copy-paste each sentence into its answer box. Then add the brackets and underline. Make any needed corrections after the bracketed word(s) and use **bold** for the corrections.*

1. I enjoy reading because it is an entertaining way for [you] to spend [your] time.

I enjoy reading because it is an entertaining way for [you] **me** to spend [your] **my** time.

2. Professor Crawford told us that we don't have to write the last essay unless you want to improve your final grade.

3. When you go to Costco, one should have a shopping list.

4. If adolescents are going to smoke marijuana, he or she should be prepared to face the possible consequences.

5. When students procrastinate writing essays for English class, they risk getting a low grade on it.

6. I like horror movies like *The Omen* because it keeps you in suspense while you are watching it.

**Principle IV.** Whenever necessary, avoid gender bias by using both masculine and feminine singular pronouns with a singular antecedent; by using an antecedent and plural pronouns; or by eliminating pronouns, if possible.

### Exercise 4

**Instructions:** Using Principle IV, correct any gender bias in the following sentences. The first one has been done for you. *Type, write, or copy-paste each sentence into its answer box. Make corrections in **bold**.*

1. When a nursing student works full time, she often falls behind in her classes.

When a nursing student works full time, **it is easy to fall behind in classes.**

2. A writer should always remember his audience and explain things clearly and logically.

3. A human being will often seek meaning by trying to understand why certain events in his life have occurred.

4. When a babysitter arrives, she should be open and friendly with the children that she will be supervising during their parents' absence.

**Principle V.** A pronoun must clearly refer to a specific antecedent. If there is no clear antecedent, you should replace the pronoun with a noun or rewrite the sentence so that the pronoun has only one possible antecedent.

## Exercise 5

**Instructions:** In the following sentences, make sure there is a clear antecedent for each pronoun. Using Principle V, replace the pronoun with a noun or rewrite the sentence so that the pronoun has only one possible antecedent. The first two have been done for you. *Type, write, or copy-paste each sentence into its answer box. Make revisions in **bold**.*

1. The teacher told her student that she could help her.

The teacher told her student, "**I can help you.**"

*In this sentence, it was unclear whether [she] and [her] referred to the teacher or the student. With the revision, it is now clear that [she] and [her] refer to the teacher.*

2. They always say that hard work is the key to success.

**People** always say that hard work is the key to success.

*In this sentence, there was no antecedent. By replacing the pronoun with a noun, it is now clear who says that hard work is the key to success.*

3. Darren called his friend Hong while he was at the club on Valencia.

4. Jane told Sofia that she had passed English 100.

5. They shouldn't charge so much for gas in this country.

6. American psychologist John B. Watson recommended in the early 1900's that psychologists study human behavior and emotions. Before that, it had focused on human mental experience rather than on human behavior such as crying, laughing, and talking.

7. Donald's car crashed into the wall, and it was badly damaged.

## Exercise 6

**Instructions:** Using Principles I through V, correct all the pronoun agreement errors in the following paragraphs. The first paragraph has been done for you (Compare the original to the revised.) *Type, write, or copy-paste the three paragraphs into the answer box; make revisions in **bold**.*

**Original 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph:** An older teenager notices and understands how past actions shape and have an impact on the present, and [they] can anticipate consequences of present actions.

**Revised 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph:**

1 **Older teenagers notice and understand** how past actions shape and have an impact on the present, and they can anticipate consequences of present actions.

2 Because his or her thinking is flexible and fluid, older teens have the cognitive tools to begin to struggle with many of the larger decisions that he will be called on to make. Though you may still turn to your parents and other adults for advice, teenagers as you gain maturity use an increasingly sophisticated and realistic appraisal of the real possibilities and his own abilities and interests when he makes decisions.

3 He or she should be encouraged to make their own decisions: whether to work or to go on to further their education, which school to attend, which job to take, whom to date, when to marry and with whom. She can also consider various career directions, religious questions, and political involvements. In addition, many young people cultivate interests in things that interest him or her. He or she may even begin to wrestle with such major questions as the purposes of his or her life.

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