Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Grammar Unit 4

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in three ways:

- Number
- Person
- Gender

Lesson One: Agreement between Personal Pronouns and Antecedents in Number

Concept: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person and gender.

- Use a singular pronoun with two or more singular antecedents joined by *or* or *nor*.

  Example:

  Either John or Ross always walks his dog at Sims Park.

- Use a plural personal pronoun with two or more antecedents joined by *and*.

  Example:

  If Martha and Edward want to participate, tell them to arrive at 8:30 A.M. sharp.

Lesson One: Agreement between Personal Pronouns and Antecedents in Number

Concept: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person and gender.

- Use a plural personal pronoun if **ANY** part of a compound antecedent joined by *or* or *nor* is plural.

  Example:

  When Rosie or her children arrive, show them their booth.

NOTE: THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER RULE WE'VE SEEN FOR SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT.

Exercises. In each sentence, fill in the blank with the pronoun (or pair of pronouns) that agrees with its antecedent.

1. Barry, Ellen, and Julie have had _____ portfolios accepted for the show.
2. Each Saturday, either Josh or Ted skates by on ____in – line skates.
3. Both Larry and Elaine like __ new neighborhood and ____ new house.
4. When Tommy and Byron arrive, tell ____we are in the cafeteria.
5. Neither Julie nor her sisters want to give up ____place.

Exercise Answers.

1. Barry, Ellen, and Julie have had their portfolios accepted for the show.
2. Each Saturday, either Josh or Ted skates by on his in-line skates.
3. Both Larry and Elaine like their new neighborhood and their new house.
4. When Tommy and Byron arrive, tell them we are in the cafeteria.
5. Neither Julie nor her sisters want to give up their place.

Lesson Two: Agreement in Person and Gender
Concept: Few singular pronouns indicate gender (masculine, feminine, neuter).

- The singular pronouns *he*, *him*, *his*, and *himself* refer to **masculine antecedents**.

- The singular pronouns *she*, *her*, *hers*, and *herself* refer to **feminine antecedents**.

- The singular pronouns *it*, *its*, and *itself* refer to **neuter antecedents** (gender neutral).
  - Animals and objects are gender neutral, unless specified.

*As part of pronoun-antecedent agreement, do NOT shift person or gender. When an antecedent can be either masculine or feminine, use *"his or her"* or rewrite the sentence.*
Each poet has his or her own particular style.

Exercises. In each sentence, correct the unnecessary shift in person or gender and label which type of antecedent is used.

1. They tried to study, but there was too much noise around you.
2. Robin dries her hair in the sun, even though you could use a hair dryer.
3. Carl took the higher path where you could see the deer.
4. The swimming power of a shark comes from his tail.
5. They swam to the far shore, where you could find shells.

Exercise Answers. In each sentence, correct the unnecessary shift in person or gender and label which type of antecedent is used.

1. They tried to study, but there was too much noise around them. (neuter)
2. Robin dries her hair in the sun, even though she (feminine) could use a hair dryer.
3. Carl took the higher path where he (masculine) could see the deer.
4. The swimming power of a shark comes from its (neuter) tail.
5. They swam to the far shore, where they (neuter) could find shells.

Lesson Three: Agreement with Indefinite Pronouns

Concept: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person and gender.

Singular		Plural	Either
Another	Everything	Several	All
Anybody	Neither	Few	Any
Anyone	Nobody	Both	More
Anything	No one	Many	Most
Each	Nothing	Others	None
Either	One		Some
Everybody	Somebody		
Everyone	Someone		
Something			

Examples: **Each** of the ~~women~~ had to put **her** suitcase in storage.

Several of the men brought **their** antique cars.

All of the **members** have sent **their** dues.

Exercises. In each sentence, fill in the blank with the pronoun (or pair of pronouns) that agrees with its antecedent.

1. Each of the girls in the family sews _____own clothes.
2. Anyone who wants to sing in the chorus may sign ____name on the list.
3. One of the girls has received ____ paycheck.
4. All of the football players have had ___ checkups.
5. Somebody has volunteered____ time to repair the fence.

Exercise Answers.

1. Each of the girls in the family sews <u>her</u> own clothes.
2. Anyone who wants to sing in the chorus may sign <u>his or her</u> name on the list.
3. One of the girls has received <u>her</u> paycheck.
4. All of the football players have had <u>their</u> checkups.
5. Somebody has volunteered <u>his or her</u> time to repair the fence.

Lesson Four: Agreement with Reflexive Pronouns

Concept: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person, and gender.

- Reflexive pronouns end in *-self* or *–selves* and are used correctly only when they refer to a word appearing earlier in the same sentence (himself, herself, itself, themselves)

* HISSELF and THEIRSELVES are NOT reflexive pronouns. They are INCORRECT!

Examples:
Incorrect: Mary treated her to an ice cream cone.
Correct: Mary treated herself to an ice cream cone.

Incorrect: Alex made hisself a sandwich.
Correct: Alex made himself a sandwich.

Exercises. In each sentence, highlight the correct pronoun in parentheses.

1. Joan taught _____ to breathe deeply when she was afraid.
2. The bat hung _____ upside down from the cave roof.
3. He set the clock to wake _____ up early for school.
4. The audience keeps telling _____ the scary film is only a movie.
5. The puppies inched _____ up onto the step.

Exercise Answers. In each sentence, highlight the correct pronoun in parentheses.

1. Joan taught (herself) to breathe deeply when she was afraid.
2. The bat hung (itself) upside down from the cave roof.
3. He set the clock to wake (himself) up early for school.
4. The audience keeps telling (itself) the scary film is only a movie.
5. The puppies inched (themselves) up onto the step.

Review 1

Additional practice:

1. When the coach and his players arrive, show (him, them) to the locker room.
2. Neither Charlie nor Ethan turned in (his, their) assignment.
3. My parents sold (their, his or her) car in 4 days.
4. Each of the boys cleans (his, their) room.
5. Romeo told (his, its) parents he wanted to have ten children.

Review 1 - Key

1. When the coach and his players arrive, show them to the locker room.

2. Neither Charlie nor Ethan turned in his assignment.

3. My parents sold their car in 4 days.

4. Each of the boys cleans his room.

5. Romeo told his parents he wanted to have 10 children.

Review 2

1. Everybody will receive (his, their) new class schedule in the mail.
2. All of the children have had (her, their) shots.
3. Chris, Carla, and Charlie had (his, their) pictures made for the yearbook.
4. Both the Bulldogs and Coach Sphire felt good about (his, their) performance.
5. In literature, it is common for each writer to choose a subject based on (their, his or her) personal experiences.

Review 2 - Key

1. Everybody will receive his new class schedule in the mail.

2. All of the children have had their shots.

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5. In literature, it is common for each writer to choose a subject based on his or her personal experiences.

Review 3

1. Rick chose the assignment (he, you) could see was easier.
2. The runners ran to the finish line where (she, they) could see the flag.
3. Many of the girls said the man's bad language offended (her, them).
4. All of the students were prepared to turn in (her, their) assignments on time.

Review 3 - Key

1. Rick chose the assignment he could see was easier.

2. The runners ran to the finish line where they could see the flag.

3. Both of the boys must wash their hands before dinner.

4. Many of the girls said the man's bad language offended her.

5. All of the students were prepared to turn in their assignments on time.