



Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun agreement means that a pronoun agrees with, or matches, in number, gender, and person the noun which it replaces or to which it refers.

<u>Person</u>	<u>Subject Pronouns</u>	<u>Object Pronouns</u>	<u>Possessive Pronouns</u>	<u>Possessive Adjectives</u>	<u>Reflexive Pronouns</u>	<u>Relative Pronouns</u>
(1st singular)	I	me	mine	my (pen)	myself	who
(2nd)	You	you	your	your	yourself	whom
(3rd)	She, he, it	her, him, it	hers, his, its	her, his, its	herself	which
(1st plural)	We	us	ours	our	ourselves	that
(2nd)	You	you	yours	your	yourselves	whose
(3rd)	They	them	theirs	their	themselves	

1. AGREE in NUMBER

Use a singular pronoun to take the place of, or refer to, a singular noun.

- ◊ If a **student** (noun) needs tutoring assistance, **she** (pronoun) should come to the Learning Center.

NOT: If a **student** (singular noun) needs tutoring assistance, **they** (plural pronoun) should come to the Learning Center.

- The indefinite pronouns **everybody, anybody, anyone, each, neither, nobody, someone, a person, etc.** are **singular** and take **singular** pronouns.
 - ◊ **Everybody** ought to do **his or her** best. (NOT: their best)
 - ◊ **Neither** [one] of the girls brought **her** umbrella. (NOT: their umbrellas)

2. AGREE in GENDER

Pronouns must agree with their male or female noun referents.

- ◊ **Samantha** (female noun) decided to focus **her** (feminine pronoun) career on solar energy technology.
- ◊ **Paul** (male) made a name for **himself** (masculine pronoun) as a famous chef.
- If the gender is not known, use s/he or his/her, or make the subject plural.
 - ◊ The two-year old **child** has trouble sharing **his/her** toys.
 - ◊ Two-year old **children** have trouble sharing **their** toys.

3. AGREE in PERSON

Continue writing in the same person: If you are writing in the first person, using the pronoun **I**, avoid switching to the second person, using the pronoun **you**, or third person, using the pronouns **he, she, they, or it**. Similarly, if you are using the third person, don't switch to first or second.

- ◊ When a person comes to class, she should have her homework ready.

NOT: When a person comes to class, they should have their homework ready.

4. REFER CLEARLY to a specific noun

- Pronouns may refer to either the subject of the sentence or the nearest noun. When the connection between the noun and pronoun is not clear, confusion may result. This is especially common when a clause starts with **it**.
 - ◊ Although the plastic bottle was in the bin, **it** was not recycled. (Is **it** the bottle or the bin?)
- Be sure pronouns are clearly linked to a specific noun.
 - ◊ I don't think **they** should allow tweens to have cell phones. (Who are **they**?)
 - ◊ The holidays are coming soon, **which** is nice. (What is nice, the holidays or the fact that they are coming?)
 - ◊ Morgan went into the nursing program. **This** may be his vocation. (What does "**this**" refer to?)
 - ◊ Put this handout in your file, so you can refer to **it**. (Does "**it**" refer to the handout or the file?)