

Lesson: Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

Learning Target

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns or other pronouns and refer to people, places, things, and ideas. The words they take the place of or refer to are called the pronouns' **antecedents**. Pronouns should **agree with** (have the same gender and number as) their antecedents. Pronouns can be **masculine** (and refer to male persons or animals), **feminine** (and refer to female persons or animals), or **neuter** (and refer to things or to people or animals of unspecified gender).

Each **boy** should have **his** calendar. [The pronoun *his* refers to the antecedent *boy*. Both the pronoun and its antecedent are singular and masculine, so they agree.]

Each **girl** should have **her** calendar. [The pronoun *her* refers to the antecedent *girl*. Both the pronoun and its antecedent are singular and feminine, so they agree.]

All **students** should have **their** calendars. [The pronoun *their* refers to the antecedent *students*. Both the pronoun and its antecedent are plural and neuter, so they agree.]

Clear Reference

Make sure that it is clear whom or what a pronoun refers to. Sometimes you will need to rewrite a sentence to make the sentence clear.

Unclear: After Ms. Cox talked to Angelica, she decided to try out a new idea. [Who decided?]

Clear: **Ms. Cox** decided to try out a new idea after **she** talked to Angelica.

Clear: **Angelica** decided to try out a new idea after **she** talked to Ms. Cox.

Unclear: Trevor makes beautiful artwork. They are amazing. [What does *they* refer to?]

Clear: Trevor makes amazing, beautiful artwork.

Clear: Trevor is amazing; he makes beautiful artwork.

Lesson: Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement (continued)

Check Your Understanding

For items 1–4, fill in the blank with a correct pronoun form.

EXAMPLE: The co-chairs are Cyndi and Miriam. Have you met them ?

1. All of the students who are auditioning should bring **their** scripts.
2. Please ask Jeremy or Justin to lend us **his** pencil for a minute.
3. Stella or Ava has **her** answer ready.
4. My neighbor has chickens named Olive and Dodger. Would you like to see **them**?

For item 5, rewrite the sentence to correct the unclear pronoun reference.

5. Are the boys still going to meet with Marcy and Katelyn, or have they already left?

Answers will vary. Sample responses are given.

Are the boys still going to meet with Marcy and Katelyn, or have **the boys** already left?

or

Are the boys still going to meet with Marcy and Katelyn, or have **the girls** already left?

or

Are the boys still going to meet with Marcy and Katelyn, or **has everybody** already left?