

Pronoun Agreement

What is Pronoun Antecedent Agreement?

- the pronoun in a sentence agrees with its **antecedent**
- the antecedent is the noun (or noun phrase) that the pronoun is referring or replacing

How does the pronoun need to agree?

1. in terms of number (singular or plural)
2. gender agreement (boy – his, girl – her, dog – it)
3. person agreement
 - first – I bought my present
 - second – you bought your present
 - third – he/she/it bought his/her/its present
 - first (plural) – we bought our presents
 - second (plural) – you bought your presents
 - third (plural) they bought their presents

Simple Examples of Pronoun Agreement

- **the dog wagged its tail** – singular pronoun-antecedent agreement
- **the dogs wagged their tails** – plural pronoun-antecedent agreement

WRONG: the dog wagged their tails, the dogs wagged its tail

- the **student** finished his/her homework
- the **students** finished their homework

WRONG: the student finished their homework, the students finished his/her homework

- The **teachers** met after school to discuss (his / their) lesson plans.
- A **student** should always bring (his / their) ID card.
- The **committee** made (its / their) final decision on the budget.

Advanced Examples of Pronoun Agreement

- Compound subject with “and” (plural pronoun):
James and Laura brought **their** instruments.
→ (Two people = plural = “their”)
- Compound subject with “and” (single unit):
Macaroni and cheese had lost **its** appeal.
→ (One dish = singular = “its”)
- Compound with “or” – closest noun determines pronoun:
Neither the students nor the teacher brought **his or her** textbook.
→ (“Teacher” is closest = singular = “his or her”)
- Compound with “or” – plural closest noun:
Neither the teacher nor the students brought **their** textbooks.
→ (“Students” is closest = plural = “their”)
- Ambiguous compound subject (rewrite needed):
Each boy or girl must bring **their** backpack. ❌
→ Each boy or girl must bring **his or her** backpack. ✔️
→ Or: All children must bring **their** backpacks.