

PRONOUNS: AGREEMENT AND REFERENCE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PRONOUN AGREEMENT: Pronouns must agree in number (singular or plural), gender (male or female), and person (first, second, or third).

| AGREEMENT IN NUMBER | AGREEMENT IN GENDER | AGREEMENT IN PERSON |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A <u>student</u> considering changing <u>his or her</u> major should speak with an advisor. | The <u>lioness</u> protected <u>her</u> cub. | <u>You</u> should watch <u>your</u> step when walking along the icy path. |
| <u>Students</u> considering changing <u>their</u> majors should speak with an advisor. | <u>Juan</u> was proud of <u>his</u> research paper. The <u>kitten</u> lost <u>its</u> mitten. | I am planning <u>my</u> vacation for late next month. |

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS: It's important to know whether an *indefinite pronoun* is SINGULAR or PLURAL to make verbs and other pronouns agree with it.

| SINGULAR | | | PLURAL |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| each, either, neither, one, anyone, anybody, anything, everyone, everybody, everything, someone, somebody, something, no one, nobody, nothing | | | both, few, several, many |
| <i>Anyone</i> can do <i>his or her</i> job. | <i>Each</i> is able to work. | <i>Someone</i> left <i>his or her</i> book. | <i>Many</i> sleep late. |
| <i>No one</i> listens to Liz. | <i>Neither</i> buys <i>his or her</i> own gas. | <i>Everyone</i> thinks it's plural. | <i>Several</i> called <i>their</i> parents. |

SPECIAL NOTE #1: When "either" and "neither" are used as conjunctions to join two subjects, verbs and pronouns agree with whatever subject is closest.

Ex. *Either* Janice *or* her roommates are going to stop by to pick up the biology text books.

Ex. *Neither* the clients *nor* the lawyer is happy with the verdict.

SPECIAL NOTE #2: The following indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural depending on the context of the sentence: *some, any, none, all, most*.

Singular: Most of the milk spilled onto the floor before I could catch it.

Plural: Most of the peanuts spilled onto the floor before I could catch them.

PRONOUN REFERENCE: Make sure that *pronoun reference* and the *meaning* of each sentence is clear.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mike told Jim <i>his</i> car was ready. > <i>Whose car is ready?</i> Better: Mike said, "Jim, your car is ready." | <i>The library</i> can help you research that topic. > <i>Can the library help?</i> Better: The librarian can help you research that topic. |
| <i>They</i> used to believe the earth was flat. > <i>Who used to believe?</i> Better: Scientists used to believe the earth was flat. | <i>They</i> sentenced him to life in prison. > <i>Who sentenced him?</i> Better: The jury sentenced him to life in prison. |

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LEARN MORE

Don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

Texts available to use in the SLC English Writing Lab:

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| <i>Grassroots with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition Susan Fawcett Chapters 20 and 24 | <i>Evergreen, A Guide to Writing with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition, Susan Fawcett Chapter 32 | The Bedford Handbook, Seventh Edition, Diana Hacker Chapters 22 – 25 |
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Online:

[Grassroots Companion Site](#)

[Evergreen Companion Site](#)

[What Is A Pronoun?](#)

[Pronouns](#)

[Using Pronouns Clearly](#)

[Pronoun Reference](#)

[A Second Quiz on Pronoun Forms](#)

[Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement](#)

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PRACTICE

Correct these sentences:

1. Anybody who knows how to play the guitar can write their own ticket.
2. A single man on vacation will always meet more women than you want.
3. Either Erick or Mark will have to drive their car to Miami.
4. Each of the pies need to be delivered to a specific address.
5. Neither the chicken nor the vegetables was cooked enough.
6. Kirstin told Rachel her hair was a mess.
7. Everyone handed in their term papers on time.
8. They say The Red Hot Chili Peppers is the best group ever.
9. The stadium will help you find your seat.
10. Most of the students are eager to begin his or her assignment.

Correct all agreement and reference problems in the following paragraph:

(There are 5 errors.)

Everyone should read a few classics for their own benefit. Even though they are not really popular right now, one could learn a lot from them. For instance, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* has a lot to say about politics in general. What happens to a person when you are given so much power? When is murder justifiable? How far should a friend carry their loyalty? What are the consequences of not listening to wise counsel? All of these questions is answered in this play.