

APSU Writing Center
Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

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Pronoun–antecedent agreement ensures that a pronoun matches the word it refers to (its antecedent) in number (singular/plural), gender, and person. Maintaining agreement improves clarity and professionalism in academic writing.

- **Incorrect:** Each student should proofread their paper before submission.
 - **Student** is singular; **their** is plural.
- **Correct:** All students should proofread their papers before submission.

Indefinite Pronouns as Antecedents

Most indefinite pronouns (anybody, everyone, each, nobody, someone, etc.) are singular and should be followed by singular pronouns.

- **Incorrect:** Everyone must bring their laptop to class.
- **Correct:** All students must bring their laptops to class.

Singular "they" for Gender Neutrality

To avoid gendered language, use singular **they** when referring to an individual.

- **Example:** If a student needs help, they should visit the APSU Writing Center.
- **Example:** Each tutor at the Writing Center should ensure their advice is clear.

Antecedents Joined by “and”

Two singular antecedents joined by **and** take a plural pronoun.

- **Example:** Professor Smith and Dr. Jones submitted their research for publication.
- **Example:** The Writing Center tutor and the student worked on their revisions together.



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Antecedents Joined by neither/nor, either/or

When antecedents are joined by **neither/nor**, or **either/or**, the pronoun agrees with the antecedent closest to it.

- **Example:** Neither the professor nor the students finished their assignments.
- **Example:** Either the Writing Center tutor or the students will share their notes.

Collective Nouns as Antecedents

A collective noun (team, committee, class, staff, etc.) is:

- **Singular** when the group is acting as a unit.
 - **Example:** The APSU Writing Center offers its services free to all enrolled students.
- **Plural** when referring to individual members.
 - **Example:** The staff at the Writing Center share their expertise with students.

Tips for Avoiding Pronoun–Antecedent Errors

- Identify the antecedent and ensure it matches the pronoun in number and gender.
- Use singular they for gender-neutral references.
- Restructure the sentence when agreement becomes awkward or unclear.



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References

St. Louis Community College Writing Center. (n.d.). *Pronoun and antecedent agreement*.

<https://stlcc.edu/student-support/academic-success-and-tutoring/writing-center/writing-resources/pronoun-antecedent-agreement.aspx>

Washtenaw Community College Writing Center. (n.d.). *Pronoun-antecedent agreement*.

https://www.wccnet.edu/learn/departments/engd/writing-center/_documents/grammar/pronoun-antecedent-agreement.pdf