

## **Pronoun Antecedent Agreement**

### **APSU Writing Center Handout**

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.

### **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.

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