

APSU Writing Center
Pronoun Consistency

Pronoun Consistency in Academic Writing

- In academic writing, it is important to maintain consistent pronouns when referring to an author.
- Switching pronouns accidentally can confuse your readers.
- Some researchers and authors intentionally use multiple sets of pronouns (she/they or he/they).
 - In those cases, variation may be appropriate if it reflects the author's stated identity.
 - If you don't want to use all sets of provided pronouns, using the first listed such as she/her or she/they is also acceptable.

How to Check Pronouns

- Review the author's institutional profile or biography.
- Check the author's personal website, if available.
- Notice how the author refers to themselves in interviews or professional materials.
- If no resources are available, using they/them/theirs is a good default.

Guidelines for Academic Writing

- Use the pronouns the author identifies with.
- Be consistent throughout your essay.
- If unsure, use the author's last name instead of a pronoun.

Examples

- **Incorrect:** Smith argues that social media affects identity formation. In her study, he examines how adolescents construct online personas.
- **Correct:** Smith argues that social media affects identity formation. In her study, she examines how adolescents construct online personas.
- **Last Name Option:** Smith argues that social media affects identity formation. In the study, Smith examines how adolescents construct online personas.



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References

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Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). *Using pronouns clearly*. Purdue Online Writing Lab.
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