

 **QUICK CHECK 2**

In the following sentences, choose the form of the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

EXAMPLE 1. The people in her family (*work, works*) hard.
1. *work*

1. *Hansel and Gretel* (*was, were*) the pageant that Squeaky was in.
2. Athletics (*has, have*) always interested Squeaky.
3. (*Don't, Doesn't*) she run well?
4. Fifty yards (*was, were*) the length of the run.
5. (*There's, There are*) not much dialogue in the story.

Agreement of Pronoun and Antecedent

A pronoun usually refers to a noun or another pronoun, called its *antecedent*.

20. A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number and gender.

Some singular personal pronouns have forms that indicate gender. Masculine pronouns (*he, him, his*) refer to males. Feminine pronouns (*she, her, hers*) refer to females. Neuter pronouns (*it, its*) refer to things (neither male nor female) and sometimes to animals.

EXAMPLES Ernie lent **his** bike to Alfonso.
Squeaky protects **her** brother.
The sergeant major took the **monkey's** paw and threw it into the fire.

Some antecedents may be either masculine or feminine. When referring to such antecedents, use both the masculine and the feminine forms.

EXAMPLE No one on the committee gave **his or her** approval.



For more about antecedents, see page 892.



The antecedent of a personal pronoun can be another kind of pronoun, such as *all* or *one*. To determine the gender of a personal pronoun in such cases, look at the phrase that follows the antecedent.

EXAMPLE Each of the **girls** took **her** place at the starting line.




Revising Awkward Pronoun Agreement

Sometimes, using both the masculine and the feminine forms to refer to an indefinite pronoun is awkward or confusing. To avoid such use, rephrase the sentence by using both a plural pronoun and a plural antecedent.

AWKWARD Everyone except Fanny signed the petition because **he or she** did not like working with the "new" Charlie.

CLEAR All of the workers except Fanny signed the petition because **they** did not like working with the "new" Charlie.

Try It Out 

Revise the following sentences to eliminate the awkward use of *his or her*.

1. Each of the characters had his or her own motives.
2. One of the stagehands had forgotten his or her tools.
3. Everyone in the play knew his or her lines.
4. Either Anna or Fred will drive his or her van.
5. Nobody forgot his or her costume.

Problems in Agreement

2p. A singular pronoun is used to refer to *anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, neither, nobody, no one, one, someone, or somebody.*

EXAMPLE Everybody will have an opportunity to express his or her opinion.

2q. A plural pronoun is used to refer to *both, few, many, or several.*

EXAMPLE Both of the novels by Mark Twain were on their shelf in the library.

2r. Either a singular or a plural pronoun may be used to refer to *all, any, most, none, or some.*

The number of the pronoun *all, any, most, none, or some* is determined by the number of the object of the preposition in the prepositional phrase following the pronoun.

EXAMPLES Only *some* of the paint spilled, but it made a big mess. [Some refers to *paint*.]
Some of the children are ready for their naps. [Some refers to *children*.]

2s. A plural pronoun is used to refer to two or more antecedents joined by *and*.

EXAMPLE When Bill and Sam wrote the ransom note, they asked for fifteen hundred dollars.

2t. A singular pronoun is used to refer to two or more singular antecedents joined by *or* or *nor*.

EXAMPLE Julio or Van will bring his football.

A singular and a plural antecedent joined by *or* or *nor* can create an awkward sentence. Revise such a sentence to avoid the problem.

AWKWARD Either Mr. Reyes or the Wilsons will be bringing their volleyball net.

REVISED Either Mr. Reyes will be bringing his volleyball net, or the Wilsons will be bringing theirs.

Sentences with singular antecedents joined by *or* or *nor* also can sound awkward if the antecedents are of different genders. If the sentence sounds awkward, revise it to avoid the problem.

AWKWARD Either Lori or Tony will read her or his poem about the Holocaust.

REVISED Either Lori will read her poem about the Holocaust, or Tony will read his.

✓ QUICK CHECK 3

For each blank in the following sentences, give a pronoun that will complete the meaning of the sentence.

EXAMPLE I. Both Alfonso and Ernie liked riding _____ bikes.
I. *their*

- Alfonso took good care of _____ bike.
- Each of the boys had _____ own problems.
- Neither of the girls from the Halloween party had kept _____ promise to Ernie.
- Perhaps both of them had _____ reasons for not meeting Ernie and Frostie at the corner.
- Did Ernie or Frostie keep _____ word?

2u. Either a singular or a plural pronoun may be used with a collective noun (such as *committee*, *flock*, and *jury*).

EXAMPLES The **committee** has prepared **its** recommendation.
[The committee as a unit has prepared the recommendation.]

The **committee** are sharing **their** ideas for the new recycling campaign. [The separate members of the committee have various ideas.]

2v. A few nouns, though plural in form, are singular and take singular pronouns.

EXAMPLE All of them had expected the **news** to be bad, but it wasn't.

2w. Words stating amounts usually take singular pronouns.

EXAMPLE Although the landlady charged **five and sixpence** a night for a room, **it** was much less than he had expected to pay.

✓ QUICK CHECK 4

For each blank in the following sentences, give a pronoun that will complete the meaning of the sentence.

EXAMPLE I. Father's team was playing, but _____ lost.
I. *it*

- The family were doing _____ chores.
- "Oranges" is also by Gary Soto, and _____ is the next selection in the book.
- _____ had only five cents, but _____ was enough for the candy.
- Your checkers are all over the floor; please clean _____ up.
- Checkers may be a good game, but I don't play _____ often.



The title of a creative work or the name of an organization or a country, even when plural in form, usually takes a singular pronoun.

EXAMPLE I enjoyed reading *The Outsiders* because **it** had interesting characters.

