

Pronoun Agreement 1

One of the most important rules of writing is this one: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent. Unfortunately, it's also one of the most difficult rules to understand.

Here's what the rule means: Each time you use a pronoun in place of a noun, you must be sure that the pronoun is the same number (singular or plural) and the same person (first, second, third) as the original noun. Clear? Well, maybe the following activity will help to clarify things. (For more information, turn to page 90 and section 441.4 in *Write Source 2000*.)



EXAMPLE

The four *deer* scattered as the skunk approached *them*.
 (A pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent. Because the noun *deer* is plural, the pronoun *them* must also be plural.)

Directions

Cross out the incorrect pronouns in the following sentences. Write corrections above them. The first one has been done for you.

1. My grandmom rolled her eyes when she heard ~~they~~^{she} can buy eggs laid by vegetarian chickens that don't eat bugs or meat by-products.
2. Grandmom always thought eating bugs was good for them.
3. Grandmom says that when she was growing up, kids were expected to eat whatever was put in front of you, and so were chickens.
4. "Things change," I said. "When IBM started in the '50s, he thought five computers throughout the world would be enough to do the job."
5. My grandmom said her doesn't see what computers have to do with chickens.

6. I pointed out that computers are used to coordinate the shipping of fruits and vegetables, making it available throughout the world any time of the year.
7. Grandmom said we should ask a chicken if they like fruits and vegetables before we make them eat this food.
8. "Not chickens, Grandmom—people demand special eggs, because he's gotten used to foods from all over the world," I explained.
9. My grandmom says they know what they would do if somebody started demanding special eggs at their house.
10. Grandmom would plunk that peanut butter jar down on the table and invite her guest to make themselves a sandwich.
11. "What if a person eats a special diet for their health?" I asked.
12. As long as she doesn't have to cook it, Grandmom supposes a person can eat whatever he or she wants.
13. A person should mind their manners, Grandmom says.
14. A guest should eat what they're served.
15. People shouldn't make unreasonable demands on the hostess even if it's important to stay on her diets.
16. People should thank the cook, Grandmom says, even if his meal is terrible!

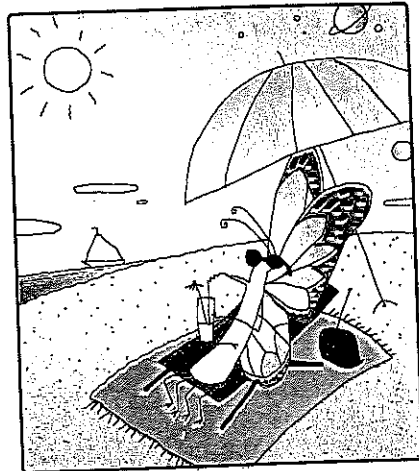


Next Step Write a story about something your grandmother or grandfather says (or base your story on a fictional grandmother or grandfather). Try to use a few pronouns in your story. Underline your pronouns and circle their antecedents. Check that the pronouns agree in number and in person with their antecedents.

Person and Number of a Pronoun

The **person** of a pronoun tells whether a pronoun is the speaker in a sentence (first person = *I, we*, etc.), the person being spoken to (second person = *you*), or the person or thing being talked about (third person = *he, it, they*, etc.).

The **number** of a pronoun tells whether a pronoun is singular or plural. The number of a pronoun and its noun (antecedent) must match. (For more information, turn to 442.2-442.5 in *Write Source 2000*.)



EXAMPLES

Singular Pronoun:

A monarch butterfly must spend *its* winter in a warm climate.

Plural Pronoun:

In late August, monarch butterflies begin *their* southern migration.

Directions

Circle the pronoun that completes each sentence below. The first sentence has been done for you.

- When asters and goldenrod bloom, (*it*, they) signal that monarchs are on the move.
- An organization called Monarch Watch involves thousands of volunteers in (*its*, *their*) tagging and logging of the butterflies.
- The volunteers gently capture the monarchs and tag (*it*, *them*).
- The volunteers then fill in data sheets and send (*it*, *them*) to university research centers.
- Environmentalists want to know whether monarchs follow a path or simply travel in a particular direction as (*it*, *they*) move across the continent.

6. (*They, You*) hope to learn whether migration is the same from year to year, and how weather affects the butterflies.
7. Monarch Watch volunteers are often teachers and students who conduct research as part of (*their, our*) science classes.
8. Using a good butterfly net, a student captures (*his or her, their*) butterfly, then holds (*them, it*) gently while applying a self-sticking tag.
9. A butterfly is tagged on a cell under (*his, its*) hind wing.
10. The mitten-shaped cell is near a butterfly's center of gravity, where the sticker application doesn't restrict (*their, its*) flight.
11. Before each butterfly is released, (*their, its*) tag number, sex, appearance, and other information are noted on a data sheet.
12. Second graders are some of the best taggers, because (*they, he*) can apply the self-sticking tags with (*their, his*) smaller fingertips!
13. The more kids know about butterflies, the better (*we, they*) will understand the connections among all living things.
14. Eastern monarchs travel to forest sites in central Mexico, where 40 million of (*they, them*) roost at a site that's open to the public.
15. (*You, They*) can see western monarchs in smaller, temporary sites from Mendocino, California, to the Ensenada region of Baja California Sur.