

# Lesson 35

## Pronoun Antecedents

- An **antecedent** is a word or words that a pronoun refers back to or replaces. Pronouns and antecedents must be in agreement. This rule also applies to possessive adjectives, such as her, their, and its.

EXAMPLES: **Maria** admits she is tired.

**The Samsons** gave Ted their lawn mower.

### A. Use arrows to connect pronouns and antecedents in the following sentences.

1. Pia admired Dave's pen, so he gave it to her.
2. Shane's new motorcycle had a flat, so he left it in the garage.
3. Lacy told Robert not to eat the chips until she had some.
4. The frog flicked its tongue, and the mosquito disappeared into its mouth.

- **Indefinite pronouns** that take a singular verb (for example, each, either, neither, none, or one, as well as pronouns ending in -body, -one, or -thing) also take a singular pronoun or pronoun adjective.

EXAMPLES: **Incorrect:** **Each** of the VJs has their own style. [singular antecedent and plural pronoun]

**Correct:** **Each** of the VJs has his or her own style. [both singular]

**Correct:** **All** of the VJs have their own styles. [both plural]

### B. Fill in each blank space with a pronoun that agrees with the indefinite pronoun. Unless the context suggests otherwise, assume the people referred to are both male and female.

1. None of my friends had \_\_\_\_\_ cell phone.
2. Several of the caged animals bared \_\_\_\_\_ teeth at me.
3. If everyone picked up \_\_\_\_\_ own garbage, this school would look a lot better.
4. Most of the class has already given \_\_\_\_\_ presentations.
5. Each of my brothers plays goalie for \_\_\_\_\_ hockey team.
6. Someone left \_\_\_\_\_ keys in the TV room.

- When the antecedent is a **collective noun**, you have two choices. If the group is acting as one unit, use a singular pronoun to refer to it. If the group members are acting individually, use a plural pronoun.

EXAMPLES: The **audience** expressed its approval. [acting as a unit]

The **audience** wiped their eyes and blew their noses. [acting as individuals]

**C. Circle the personal pronoun that agrees with the antecedent. Underline the antecedent.**

1. A flock of starlings gathers outside my window each morning and sings (its, their) wake-up song at high decibels.
2. A bunch of bananas hung in the tree until Asher chopped (it, them) down.
3. The committee agreed to meet again in two months, after (its, their) holidays were over.
4. The class was given (its, their) first big assignment this week.
5. The team held out (its, their) hands for the traditional handshake after the game.
6. The jury could not speak to anyone, including (its, their) loved ones, until the trial ended.

- The antecedents of the pronouns you use must be clear to your reader.
- Be particularly careful when using the pronouns it, this, and that, which are often mistakenly used without a clear antecedent.

EXAMPLES: **Vague:** The driving instructor wanted me to postpone my road test so I could perfect my parallel parking. I told her that would not be easy. [Would postponing the road test be difficult, or practising parallel parking?]

**Revised:** I told her postponing the test would not be easy.

**Revised:** I told her that perfecting my parallel parking would not be easy.

**D. Rewrite the following sentences to make the pronoun antecedent clear.**

1. The old sci-fi movie showed scenes of a huge creature with green scales rising out of a lagoon and terrorizing a town. It was soon destroyed.

---

---

2. Many retired Canadians go to Florida every winter, following the example of migrating birds that need to escape the cold. These are known as "snowbirds."

---

---

3. I went to get the dictionary to find out the meaning of the word, but it was not there.

---

---

4. The film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* is an artful retelling of *The Odyssey*, Homer's epic tale of the journey of Odysseus. It is set in the southern United States in the 1930s.

---

---