Pronouns take the place of a noun, a noun phrase, or another pronoun. A pronoun acts like a noun, but it does not identify a specific person, place, or thing. Like the noun it replaces, a pronoun must agree with the verb in number.

Personal Pronouns
A personal pronoun refers to a specific person or thing and is either singular or plural. Personal pronouns are classified as follows:

- **First person** – indicates the person who is speaking.
  - Singular (*I, me*)
  - Plural (*we, us*)
- **Second person** – indicates the person who is being addressed.
  - Singular and Plural (*you*)
- **Third person** – indicates the person or thing that is being discussed.
  - Singular (*he, him, she, her, it*)
  - Plural (*they, them*)

Example: I will tell him to arrive before they leave.

Possessive Pronouns
A possessive pronoun indicates possession or ownership. Possessive pronouns are classified as follows:

- **First person** – indicates the person who is speaking.
  - Singular (*my, mine*)
  - Plural (*our, ours*)
- **Second person** – indicates the person who is being addressed.
  - Singular and Plural (*your, yours*)
- **Third person** – indicates the person or thing that is being discussed.
  - Singular (*his, her, hers, its*)
  - Plural (*their, theirs*)

Example: My dog ran into your yard and took his ball.

Reflexive Pronouns
A reflexive pronoun ends in *–self* or *–selves* and refers to the subject of a clause.

- **First person** – indicates the person who is speaking.
  - Singular (*myself*)
  - Plural (*ourselves*)
- **Second person** – indicates the person who is being addressed.
  - Singular (*yourself*)
  - Plural (*yourselves*)
- **Third person** – indicates the person or thing that is being discussed.
  - Singular (*himself, herself, itself*)
  - Plural (*themselves*)

Example: I decorated the ballroom myself.
Interrogative Pronouns
An interrogative pronoun is used to introduce a direct or indirect question.

- who
- whose
- whom
- what
- which

Example: Who owns this house?

Demonstrative Pronouns
A demonstrative pronoun is used to identify specific persons, places, things, or ideas.

- this
- these
- that
- those

Example: That is the best hotel in this town.

Relative Pronouns
A relative pronoun is used to introduce a relative clause.

- that
- which
- whoever
- whose
- who
- whom
- whomever

Example: Sarah was the one who performed in the play.

Indefinite Pronouns
An indefinite pronoun refers to a nonspecific person, place, or thing in a more general way than a noun does.

- all
- another
- any
- anybody
- anyone
- both
- each
- every
- everybody
- everyone
- few
- neither
- nobody
- many
- neither
- one
- many
- most
- none
- neither
- other
- neither
- one
- neither
- one
- neither
- other
- others
- some
- somebody
- someone
- something

Example: All of the students are attending the history lecture.

Pronoun Usage

Pronoun Reference
The noun the pronoun replaces is called the antecedent (The word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers). The antecedent must be specifically stated. Place the pronoun as close as possible to the noun it is replacing. If the pronoun reference is unclear, it is best to use the noun itself.

Example: Unclear: Sue and Sarah drove to Virginia in her car. (Who does her refer to? It is not clear whose car was used.)
Clear: Sue and Sarah drove to Virginia in Sarah’s car.

Pronoun Placement
Do not use a pronoun immediately after the noun it replaces.

Example: Incorrect: Sarah she attends Southeastern Louisiana University.
Correct: Sarah attends Southeastern Louisiana University.

Exception: When using intensive pronouns, which end in –self and emphasizes the preceding noun or pronoun, the pronoun should be placed after the noun it modifies.

Example: Sam himself was eager to attend the Olympic Winter Games.

Appositives
An appositive is a noun or pronoun placed next to another noun or pronoun to provide additional identification. Usually, an appositive follows the noun it modifies, but it can also precede it.

Example: My sister Sarah lives in Virginia.

Pronouns and Gender
A pronoun must agree in gender with the noun to which it refers. Refer to page 457 in Universal Keys for Writers, 2nd edition, to learn how to avoid gender bias in pronoun references.

Example: My brother sold his house.
**Pronoun Agreement**

Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in **number** (singular or plural), **person** (first, second, or third person), and **gender** (masculine, feminine, or neuter). Singular pronouns (*he, him, she, her, it, me, myself, oneself*) should refer to singular antecedents. Plural pronouns (*we, us, they, them, their*) should refer to plural antecedents.

Example: Jake sold his car before moving to New York. (singular – his refers to Jake)
Bob and Sarah moved into their new house last year. (plural – their refers to Bob and Sarah)

**Common Problems with Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement**

1. **Agreement with Compound Antecedents**
   A compound antecedent consists of two or more antecedents joined with **and**. Generally, a plural pronoun is used to refer to a compound antecedent.

   Example: Beth and Jane will begin their first semester of college in August.

   However, if the elements of a compound antecedent refer to a single unit (one person, thing or idea), a singular pronoun is used to refer to the compound antecedent.

   Example: The owner and president invited his or her staff to the annual charity ball. (Owner and president identifies a single person)

   When the compound antecedent is preceded by **each** or **every**, use a singular pronoun to refer to the compound antecedent.

   Example: Every Spanish and French student will take his or her final on Friday. (Every precedes Spanish and French student)

   When a compound antecedent is linked by **or** or **nor**, use a singular pronoun to refer to the compound antecedent.

   Example: Neither Jake nor Bob passed his physics final exam. (Jake and Bob are linked by nor)

   If one part of a compound antecedent is singular and one part is plural, the pronoun agrees in person and number with the closest antecedent.

   Example: Sarah and her students will take their places on stage in five minutes. (Use the plural pronoun their because the antecedent her students is closest to the pronoun.)

2. **Agreement with Collective Noun Antecedents**
   A collective noun (*union, team, family, group, class, committee*) is a noun with a singular form that names a group of individuals or things. If the group acts as a single unit, the collective noun antecedent is singular and a singular pronoun is used.

   Example: The committee announced its decision to close the factory. (All members of the committee acted as a single unit.)

   If the members of the group act individually, the collective noun antecedent is plural and a plural pronoun is used.

   Example: The acting group assumed their positions on stage. (Each member of the group acted individually.)

3. **Agreement with Indefinite Pronoun Antecedents**
   An indefinite pronoun refers to persons, places, or things in a more general way than a noun does. Most indefinite pronouns (see the following list) are singular and require singular pronouns.

   Example: Each of these families has its own holiday traditions. (its refers to the singular indefinite pronoun each, not these families.)

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<th>Indefinite Pronouns</th>
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