

1 Here's the Idea

- ▶ **A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, gender, and person.** An **antecedent** is the noun or pronoun to which a pronoun refers.

Agreement in Number

If the antecedent of a pronoun is singular, use a singular pronoun.
If the antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun.

REFERS TO

Neil Armstrong knew early in life that **he** wanted a career in aviation.

Astronauts undergo strenuous training before **they** can blast off into space.

In Compound Subjects A plural pronoun is used to refer to nouns or pronouns joined by *and*.

REFERS TO

Armstrong and Aldrin have taken **their** place in history.

A pronoun that refers to nouns or pronouns joined by *or* or *nor* should agree with the noun or pronoun nearest to it.

REFERS TO

Neither the **astronauts** nor **NASA** neglected **its** duties.

↑ SINGULAR PRONOUN

REFERS TO

Neither **NASA** nor the **astronauts** neglected **their** duties.

↑ PLURAL PRONOUN

With Collective Nouns A collective noun, such as *crew*, *team*, *audience*, or *family*, may be referred to by either a singular or a plural pronoun. The collective noun's number is determined by its meaning in the sentence.

A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be singular if the collective noun names a group acting as a unit.

REFERS TO

The **crew** is completing **its** countdown to the launch.
(The crew is acting as a single unit.)

A pronoun that refers to a collective noun should be plural if the collective noun names the members or parts of a group acting individually.

REFERS TO

The crew will carry out their assignments.

(The crew members are acting individually.)

Agreement in Gender and Person

The gender of a pronoun must be the same as the gender of its antecedent. When the antecedent could be either feminine or masculine, use the phrase “he or she” or “his or her.”

During the flight, an astronaut conducts his or her experiments.

You can often avoid the awkward “he or she” construction by making both the pronoun and its antecedent plural. Notice that you may also need to change the verb to a plural form.

During the flight, astronauts conduct their experiments.

The person of the pronoun must agree with the person of its antecedent.

All astronauts should take ^{their} ~~you~~ responsibilities seriously.