Grammatical Agreement

Noun-Pronoun Agreement:

Pronoun: A pronoun is a substitute for a noun. It refers to a person, place, thing, feeling, or quality, but does not refer to it by its name. The pronoun in the following sample sentence is bolded.

The revolutionary film High School Musical was foundational for a generation. **It** provides a unique telling of a classic plotline with the twist of adding musical numbers in unsuspected voices.

Types of Pronouns:

Personal	I, you, he, she, we, they
Possessive	my, your, her, his, their
Relative	who, whom, whose, which, that
Demonstrative	this, that, these, those
Indefinitely	anybody, something, all, anything, etc.
Intensive/Reflexive	yourself, herself, myself

Antecedent: An antecedent is the word, phrase, or clause that a pronoun refers to within the sentence. The antecedent in the following sentence is bolded.

The revolutionary film High School Musical was foundational for a generation. It provides a unique telling of a classic plotline with the twist of adding musical numbers in unsuspected voices.

Agreement: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in three ways.

1. **Number: Singular versus Plural**
   - ➢ If the noun you are replacing is singular, the pronoun must be singular too. If it is a plural noun, use a plural pronoun. Remember that the words everybody, anybody, anyone, each, neither, nobody, someone, a person, etc. are singular and require singular pronouns.
     - ✓ If a basketball player wants to join the Spring musical, he must audition.
2. **Gender: Masculine versus Feminine**
   - ➢ If an antecedent noun is a male/male identifying, the pronoun must be masculine. If the noun is female/female identifying, the pronoun must be feminine. Please see note* at the bottom of this page for more about gender and pronouns.
     - ✓ My son and his friend went to the New Year's Eve Party.
     - ☒ My son and her friend went to the New Year's Eve Party.
3. **Person: Quality of Being**
     - ✓ If you want to join the Spring musical, you must quit the basketball team.
     - ☒ If a person wants to join the Spring musical, you must quit the basketball team.

Note*: Gender neutrality and pronoun preferences are important to keep in mind when writing. There are professor preferences for grammatical agreement with pronouns in academic writing, but always respect the

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preferred pronouns of the person you are writing about. “They/them” can be gender neutral pronouns. “It” should only be used for objects, never people.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-Verb Agreement refers to the fact that the subject and verb in a sentence must agree in number. In other words, they must both be singular, or they must both be plural. You can’t have a singular subject with a plural verb and vice versa. The tricky part is knowing when a subject will count as singular or plural.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns/pronouns connected by “and,” use a plural verb.
    - **[Ex.]** Troy and Gabriella are at the championships.
    - **[Ex.]** Ryan and his sister were always the lead roles.
- Two or more nouns connected by “or” and “nor” require a singular verb.
    - **[Ex.]** The basketball championship nor the decathlon team meeting is on Saturday.
    - **[Ex.]** Gabriella or Sharpay is going to be the lead.
- When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun, or a pronoun joined by “or/nor,” the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is closest to the verb in the sentence.
    - **[Ex.]** Gabriella or the other classmates write the problem on the board.
    - **[Ex.]** The other classmates or Gabriella writes the problem on the board.
- Use a singular verb with sums of money or periods of time.
    - **[Ex.]** The Wildcats realized that $1,000 is a lot to fundraise.
    - **[Ex.]** Three years is long enough for Troy and Gabriella to know they love each other.
- Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person, but are considered singular and take a singular verb, such as group, team, committee, class, and family.
    - **[Ex.]** The team runs during practice.
    - **[Ex.]** The drama department has a long history with the sports department.
- Expressions such as with, together with, including, accompanied by, in addition to, or as well do not change the number of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is too.
    - **[Ex.]** All of the teenagers, including Troy, are singing at the karaoke party.
    - **[Ex.]** Troy, along with all the teenagers, is singing at the karaoke party

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