Chapter 8

Pronouns

Writing Activity in Miniature

EXERCISE A

Before you work on this chapter, write a Microtheme on the following topic. Write small enough to leave room for marking later. After you have studied this chapter, return to your Microtheme and complete Exercise B to practice what you have learned.

Suggested Microtheme Topic: Write a Microtheme of 80 to 100 words about needed changes in procedures, management, products, or services in your workplace; if you do not have a job, write about needed changes at home or in a class.

EXERCISE B

Connecting Your Learning Objectives with Your Microtheme

Complete this exercise after you have studied this chapter.

1. Underline all pronouns and consider their position in sentence structure.
2. Make sure that pronouns are in the correct cases, objective or subjective.
3. Check to make sure that pronouns agree in person, number, and gender.
4. Draw a line from each pronoun to its antecedent to make sure that it has clear reference.
Should you say, “Between you and I” or “Between you and me”? What about “Let’s you and I do this” or “Let’s you and me do this”? Are you confused about when to use who and whom? Is it “Everyone should wear their coat, or his coat, or his or her coat”? Is there anything wrong with saying, “When you walk down the streets of Laredo”?

The examples in the first paragraph represent the most common problems people have with pronouns. This chapter will help you identify the standard forms and understand why they are correct. The result should be additional expertise and confidence in your writing.

Pronoun Case

Case is the form a pronoun takes as it fills a position in a sentence. Words such as you and it do not change, but others do, and they change in predictable ways. For example, I is a subject word and me is an object word. As you refer to yourself, you will select a pronoun that fits a certain part of sentence structure. You say, “I will write the paper,” not “Me will write the paper,” because I is in the subject position. But you say, “She will give the apple to me,” not “She will give the apple to I” because me is in the object position. These are the pronouns that change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
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<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
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<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
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<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
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<tr>
<td>who, whoever</td>
<td>whom, whomever</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Subjective-case pronouns can fill two positions in a sentence.

1. Pronouns in the subjective case may fill subject positions.

   a. Some will be easy to identify because they are at the beginning of the sentence.

   I dance in the park.

   He dances in the park.
She dances in the park.
We dance in the park.
They dance in the park.

Who is dancing in the park?

b. Others will be more difficult to identify because they are not at the beginning of a sentence and may not appear to be part of a clause. The words than and as are signals for these special arrangements, which can be called incompletely stated clauses.

He is taller than I (am).
She is younger than we (are).
We work as hard as they (do).

The words am, are, and do, which complete the clauses, have been omitted. We are actually saying, “He is taller than I am,” “She is younger than we are,” and “We work as hard as they do.” The italicized pronouns are subjects of “understood” verbs.

2. Pronouns in the subjective case may refer back to the subject.

a. They may follow a form of the verb to be, such as was, were, am, is, and are.

I believe it is he.
It was she who spoke.
The victims were they.

b. Some nouns and pronouns refer back to an earlier noun without referring back through the verb.

The leading candidates—Pedro, Darnelle, Steve, Kimilieu, and I—made speeches.

**OBJECTIVE CASE**

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<th>Singular</th>
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<tr>
<td>First Person:</td>
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<td>me</td>
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<td>Second Person:</td>
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<td>you</td>
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<td>Third Person:</td>
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<td>him, her, it</td>
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<td>whom</td>
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</table>

Objective-case pronouns can also fill two positions in sentences.
Pronouns in the objective case may fill object positions.

a. They may be objects after the verb. A direct object answers the question what or whom in connection with the verb.

   We brought it to your house. [What did we bring? it]
   We saw her in the library. [Whom did we see? her]

   An indirect object answers the question to whom in connection with the verb.

   I gave him the message. [To whom did I give the message? to him]
   The doctor told us the test results. [To whom did the doctor tell the results? to us]

b. They may be objects after prepositions.

   The problem was clear to us.
   I went with Steve and him.

2. Objective-case pronouns may also refer back to object words.

   They had the results for us—Judy and me.
   The judge addressed the defendants—John and her.

TECHNIQUES FOR DETERMINING CASE

Here are three techniques that will help you decide which pronoun to use when the choice seems difficult.

1. If you have a compound element (such as a subject or an object of a preposition), consider only the pronoun part. The sound alone will probably tell you the answer.

   She gave the answer to Yoshi and (I, me).

   Yoshi and the pronoun make up a compound object of the preposition to. Disregard the noun, Yoshi, and ask yourself, “Would I say, ‘She gave the answer to me or to I?’” The way the words sound would tell you the answer is to me. Of course, if you immediately notice that the pronoun is in an object position, you need not bother with sound.

2. If you are choosing between who (subject word) and whom (object word), look to the right to see if the next verb has a subject. If it does not, the pronoun probably is the subject, but if it does, the pronoun probably is an object.

   The person (who, whom) works hardest will win. [Who is the correct answer because it is the subject of the verb works.]
   The person (who, whom) we admire most is José. [Whom is the correct answer because the next verb, admire, already has a subject, we. Whom is an object.]
A related technique works the same way. If the next important word after *who* or *whom* in a statement is a noun or pronoun, the correct word will almost always be *whom*. However, if the next important word is not a noun or pronoun, the correct word will be *who*.

To apply this technique, you must disregard qualifier clauses such as “I think,” “it seems,” and “we hope.”

Tyrone is a natural leader (*who*, *whom*) has charisma. [Who is the correct answer; it is followed by something other than a noun or pronoun.]

Tyrone is a natural leader (*who*, *whom*), we think, has charisma. [Who is the correct answer; it is followed by the qualifier clause *we think*, which is then followed by something other than a noun or pronoun.]

Tyrone is a natural leader (*who*, *whom*) we supported. [Whom is the correct answer; it is followed by a pronoun.]

3. *Let’s* is made up of the words *let* and *us* and means “you *let us*”; therefore, when you select a pronoun to follow it, consider the two original words and select another object word—*me*.

   Let’s you and (I, *me*) take a trip to Westwood. [Think of “You let us, you and me, take a trip to Westwood.” *Us* and *me* are object words.]

**EXERCISE 1 Selecting Pronouns**

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. We admired his beer can collection, so he left it to (I, *me*) and (she, *her*) in his will.

2. (He, *Him*) and (I, *me*) found true love via the Lovers-R-Us.com online dating service.

3. He deserves to win more than (her, *she*).

4. The final showdown will be between (they, *them*) and (we, *us*).

5. No one can beat (we, *us*), so let’s you and (I, *me*) apply to be contestants on the *Wheel of Fortune* game show.

6. (Us, *We*) attorneys resent being compared to sharks.

7. The show delighted and amazed (us, *we*) puppet enthusiasts.

8. The individual (*who*, *whom*) gave his mother a vacuum cleaner for Mother’s Day deserves a tongue-lashing.

9. You can hire (*whoever*, *whomever*) you choose.

10. Between you and (I, *me*), I didn’t care for the twenty-minute drum solo.
EXERCISE 2 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. (She, Her) and (I, me) went to the Ripley’s Believe It or Not Museum.
2. (We, Us) young people are fascinated by the weird, the gross, and the creepy.
3. I would rather go to the museum with you than with (she, her).
4. There are those (who, whom) would urge you not to waste your money to see oddities like shrunken heads and a portrait of John Wayne made of dryer lint.
5. Robert L. Ripley, an eccentric newspaper cartoonist (who, whom) loved to travel, collected strange things.
6. He is the man (who, whom) we can thank for acquiring many of the artifacts now housed in forty-four “Odditoriums” in ten different countries.
7. (Who, Whom) wouldn’t be entertained by a stuffed six-legged cow or pictures of two-headed lambs and other freaks of nature?
8. And don’t forget the bizarre videos, like the one of a man (who, whom) swallows and then regurgitates a live mouse.
9. I feel sorry for (whoever, whomever) misses the replica of the Mona Lisa made out of croutons.
10. Just between you and (I, me), though, the wax figures of bizarre accident victims, like the man impaled on a crowbar, were a little unnerving.

EXERCISE 3 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. (Who, Whom) did the judges crown Zucchini Queen?
2. To (who, whom) did the wealthy widow leave her vast fortune?
3. She was a woman (who, whom) loved cats, so her pets inherited her estate.
4. For (who, whom) are you buying this handsome set of Ginsu knives?
5. I know someone (who, whom) actually likes school cafeteria food.
6. (Who, Whom) is going to get the blue ribbon for the best pickles?
7. Seventeenth-century poet John Donne warned, “Ask not for (who, whom) the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”
8. How do I know (who, whom) to trust?
9. She addressed her love letter “To (Who, Whom) It May Concern.”
10. The winner of the Spelling Bee was the child (who, whom) spelled the word sesquipedalian correctly.
EXERCISE 4 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. (Who, Whom) is next in line for the throne?
2. (Who, Whom) should I call if I need help assembling my antigravity machine?
3. We all know (who, whom) put the superglue on the boss’s chair.
4. With (who, whom) are you dancing next?
5. The sailor (who, whom) swabbed the deck did an excellent job.
6. When her husband suggested that it would be fun to host a party for one hundred of their closest friends, she replied, “Fun for (who, whom)?”
7. (Who, Whom) did you marry in Las Vegas’ drive-thru wedding chapel?
8. The contestant (who, whom) tripped on her evening gown and fell still managed to win first runner-up.
9. He will call the plumber, (who, whom) will know what to do.
10. “What you know is not as important as (who, whom) you know,” he confided.

EXERCISE 5 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. Let’s you and (I, me) consider some stories called urban legends.
2. These are stories heard by people like you and (I, me), which are passed on as if they were true.
3. We hear them from people (who, whom) have heard them from others.
4. You have probably heard more of them than (I, me), but I’ll tell some anyway.
5. One is about a guard dog named Gork (who, whom) was found choking in his owner’s bedroom.
6. The owner, (who, whom) loved Gork dearly, took him to the veterinarian, left him, and headed home.
7. While driving home, the owner answered his cell phone, asking “To (who, whom) am I speaking?”
8. “This is your vet calling. Just between you and (I, me), you have a big problem here.”
9. “Gork has someone’s detached finger stuck in his throat, and I’ve called the police, (who, whom) are on their way to your house.”
10. Eventually the police arrested an angry armed man (who, whom) they suspected had broken into the owner’s house, where Gork had bitten off and choked on the intruder’s finger while the intruder, (who, whom) had crawled into a closet, passed out from loss of blood.
EXERCISE 6 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. Another famous urban legend, involving two motorists, was told to my sister and (me, I) years ago.

2. Between you and (I, me), the story is sexist, but this is the way (we, us) heard it.

3. A motorist, (who, whom) was named Al, needed someone to push his car, so he called on Sue, his neighbor, (who, whom) lived next door.

4. “I need a push to get my car started,” he said to her. “Let’s you and (I, me) work together, and I’ll be grateful forever.”

5. “You’re a special person (who, whom) I’ve always wanted to befriend,” she said happily. “Tell me what to do.”

6. “My car has an automatic transmission, which means the car won’t start at less than thirty-five miles per hour,” said Al, (who, whom) talked fast.

7. Al sat in his car as happy as (her, she) when he looked in his rear-view mirror and saw (she, her) heading toward his back bumper at a high speed.

8. After the collision, Al stumbled out of his car and confronted Sue, (who, whom), despite her injuries, was smiling.

9. “Look what you’ve done to you and (I, me)! ” Al yelled.

10. “Let’s you and (I, me) review what you said,” she answered coolly. “You said, ‘thirty-five miles per hour,’ and that’s exactly what I was doing.”

EXERCISE 7 Selecting Pronouns

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. My brother can tell this urban legend better than (I, me), but here is my version.

2. A man (who, whom) always wanted a 1958 Corvette saw one advertised in the newspaper for twenty dollars.

3. Within an hour he had purchased the car from a person named Lola, but before he drove away, he said, “(Who, Whom) is the person (who, whom) authorized you to make the sale?”

4. “It’s my husband, Jake, (whom, who) I now despise because he ran away with his secretary.”

5. “Last week,” Lola went on, “he sent this fax: ‘I’ve spent all my money here in Las Vegas, and Flo and (me, I) need your help.’”

6. “Please sell my Corvette and send me the money. Just between you and (I, me), I miss you lots.”
7. The man (who, whom) bought the Corvette said, “And now you’re going to send Flo and (he, him) the money?”

8. “That’s right, but he didn’t tell me the price. So now I’m sending twenty dollars to this jerk (whom, who) I thought I loved.”

9. That urban legend was told to my family and (I, me) when I was a wide-eyed child.

10. Some people insist that the buyer was a friend of someone (whom, who) they know.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Every pronoun refers to an earlier noun, which is called the antecedent of the pronoun. The antecedent is the noun that the pronoun replaces. The pronoun brings the reader back to the earlier thought. Here are some examples:

I tried to buy tickets for the concert, but they were all sold.

Roger painted a picture of a pickup truck. It was so good that he entered it in an art show.

A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in person, number, and gender. Person—first, second, or third—indicates perspective, or point of view. Number indicates singular or plural. Gender indicates masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Subject Words

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<td>us</td>
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AGREEMENT IN PERSON

Avoid needless shifting of person, which means shifting of point of view, such as from I to you. First person, second person, and third person indicate perspectives from which you can write. Select one point of view and maintain it, promoting continuity and consistency. Needless shifting of person, meaning changing perspectives without reasons important for your content and purpose, is distracting and awkward. Each point of view has its appropriate purposes.

First Person

Using the word I and its companion forms we, me, and us, the first-person point of view emphasizes the writer, who is an important part of the subject of the composition. Choose first person for friendly letters, accounts of personal experience, and, occasionally, business correspondence, such as a letter of application for a job, which requires self-analysis.

Observe the presence of the writer and the use of I in this example.

I could tell that the wedding would not go well when the caterers started serving drinks before the ceremony and the bride began arguing with her future mother-in-law. After the sound system crashed, the band canceled, and I wished I had not come.

Second Person

Using or implying the word you, the second-person point of view is fine for informal conversation, advice, and directions. Although it is occasionally found in academic writing, most instructors prefer that you use it only in process analysis, instructions in how to do something.

In this example, note that the word you is sometimes understood and not stated.

To juggle three balls, first you place two balls (A and B) in one hand and one ball (C) in the other. Then toss one of the two balls (A), and before you catch it with your other hand, toss the single ball (C) from that hand. Before that ball (C) lands in the other hand, toss the remaining inactive ball (B). Then pick up the balls and repeat the process until the balls no longer fall to the ground.

Third Person

Referring to subject material, individuals, things, or ideas, the third-person point of view works best for most formal writing, be it academic or professional. Third-person pronouns include he, she, it, they, him, her, and them. Most of your college writing—essay exams, reports, compositions that explain and argue, critiques, and research papers—will be from this detached perspective with no references to yourself.

In this example, written in the third person, the name Bartleby is replaced by forms of he.

Bartleby, one of Herman Melville’s most memorable characters, has befuddled critics for more than a century. At a point in his life chosen for
no obvious reason, he decides not to work, not to cooperate with others, and not to leave the premises of his employer because he "prefer[s] not to." Most readers do not know what to make of him.

Correcting Problems of Agreement in Person

Most problems with pronoun agreement in person occur with the use of you in a passage that should have been written in the first or third person. If your composition is not one of advice or directions, the word you is probably not appropriate and should be replaced with a first- or third-person pronoun.

If you are giving advice or directions, use you throughout the passage, but if you are not, replace each you with a first- or third-person pronoun that is consistent with the perspective, purpose, and content of the passage.

### Inconsistent:
I love to travel, especially when you go to foreign countries.

### Consistent:
I love to travel, especially when I go to foreign countries.

### Inconsistent:
When you are about to merge with moving traffic on the freeway, one should not stop his or her car.

### Consistent:
When you are about to merge with moving traffic on the freeway, you should not stop your car.

### Consistent:
When one is about to merge with moving traffic on the freeway, one should not stop his or her car. [using third-person pronouns, including the indefinite pronoun one]

### Consistent:
When drivers are about to merge with moving traffic on the freeway, they should not stop their cars. [using third-person plural pronouns to match plural noun]

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**EXERCISE 8 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Person**

Each of the following sentences has one or more needless changes in pronoun person. Correct each problem by crossing out the inconsistent pronoun and substituting a consistent one. Change verb forms, also, if necessary.

1. People fishing on the Amazon River know that when you hook a blood-thirsty piranha, you have to be careful of its razor-sharp teeth.

2. Some people think you can make it rain by washing your car.

3. Some of my friends have no idea where Peru is located, but you know the words to all of the Beatles’ songs.

4. I got her to admit that astrology is hooey, but you couldn’t convince her to stop reading her daily horoscope.
5. Every male knows that you will seldom hear a woman laugh at the antics of the Three Stooges.

6. She knew that the seating-chart mistake was her fault because you should not place a baron above a count.

7. The magicians forgot that you can’t fool everyone all of the time.

8. Wise people remind us that if you don’t know history, you are doomed to repeat it.

9. They should have known that you can’t keep a good woman down.

10. Pyromaniac chefs love to flambé, especially when you light the Baked Alaska on fire.

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**EXERCISE 9 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Person**

Complete the following sentences while maintaining agreement in person. Use at least one personal pronoun in each completion.

**First Person**

1. I know that it’s important to drink enough water, so ________________________

2. However, I sometimes drink too many sodas and cups of coffee, and ________________________

3. Hydrating my body properly causes ________________________

**Second Person**

1. If you want to make sure your body is properly hydrated, ________________________

2. Your body functions better when ________________________

3. Health experts recommend drinking eight glasses of water per day; therefore, ________________________
**Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement**

**Third Person**

1. Health-conscious people always make sure that ____________________________

2. Healthy people know that when they drink eight glasses of water per day, _____

3. When people feel thirsty, ____________________________

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**AGREEMENT IN NUMBER**

Most problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement involve **number**. The main principle is simple: If the antecedent (the word the pronoun refers back to) is singular, use a singular pronoun. If the antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun.

1. A singular antecedent requires a singular pronoun.
   
   Hoang forgot his notebook.

2. A plural antecedent requires a plural pronoun.
   
   Many students cast their votes today.

3. A singular indefinite pronoun as an antecedent takes a singular pronoun. Most indefinite pronouns are singular. The following are common indefinite singular pronouns: anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, no one, nobody, one, somebody, someone.

   Each of the girls brought her book.

   When one makes a promise, one [or he or she] should keep it.

4. A plural indefinite pronoun as an antecedent takes a plural pronoun.

   Few knew their assignments.

5. Certain indefinite pronouns do not clearly express either a singular or plural number. Agreement, therefore, depends on the meaning of the sentence. These pronouns are all, any, none, and some.

   All of the grapefruit was good.

   All of the grapefruits were gone.

   None of the cake is acceptable.

   None of the cakes are acceptable.

6. Two or more antecedents, singular or plural, take a plural pronoun. Such antecedents are usually joined by and or by commas and and.

   Howard and his parents bought their presents early.

   Students, instructors, and the administration pooled their ideas at the forum.
7. Alternative antecedents—that is, antecedents joined by or, nor, whether/or, either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also—require a pronoun that agrees with the nearer antecedent.

Neither Sam nor his friends lost their way.

Neither his friends nor Sam lost his way.

8. In a sentence with an expression such as one of those ______ who, the antecedent is usually the plural noun that follows.

He is one of those people who want their money now.

9. In a sentence with the expression the only one of those ______ who, the antecedent is usually the singular word one.

She is the only one of the members who wants her money now.

10. When collective nouns such as team, jury, committee, and band are used as antecedents, they take a singular pronoun if they are considered as units.

The jury is doing its best to follow the judge’s directions.

When individual behavior is suggested, antecedents take a plural form.

The jury are putting on their coats.

11. The words each, every, and many a(n) before a noun make the noun singular.

Each child and adult was his or her own authority.

Each and every person doubted himself or herself.

Many a person is capable of knowing himself or herself.

EXERCISE 10 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Number

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. The band always ends (its, their) concert with a lively tuba solo.

2. Each and every American should save money, or (they, he or she) may not have enough for retirement.

3. Each camper must bring (their, his or her) own shaving cream.

4. If the class doesn’t go on the field trip, (it, they) will miss the mummy exhibit.

5. Each of those farmers knows that (he, they) must rotate (his, their) crops.

6. Pauline and Reggie left (their, his or her) hearts in San Francisco.

7. Everyone should leave (their, his or her) world a better place.

8. Neither the bride nor the bridesmaids could control (her, their) giggles during the ceremony.
9. He is one of those men who likes to drive (his, their) car fast.
10. Every rose has (its, their) thorn, every dog has (its, his or her) day, and every cloud has (its, his or her) silver lining.

**EXERCISE 11 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Number**

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. An army of ants made (its, their) way toward the unsuspecting picnickers.
2. The company alienated many of (its, their) faithful customers by raising prices.
3. The crowd of onlookers booed (its, their) disapproval when the knight was thrown from his horse.
4. Judy is the only one of the girls who has dared to dye (her, their) hair purple.
5. Neither the pilot nor the flight attendants realized (his or her, their) mistake.
6. A parent knows when (his or her, their) child is not being honest.
7. The U.S. Marines wants (their, its) equipment in top condition.
8. The camel offers good desert transportation because of (its, their) relatively low need for water.
9. Each of the women wanted (her, their) groceries bagged in paper instead of plastic.
10. Several members of the chess team are setting up (its, their) boards.

**AGREEMENT IN GENDER**

A pronoun should agree with its antecedent in gender, if the gender of the antecedent is specific. Masculine and feminine pronouns are gender-specific: *he, him, she, her*. Others are neuter: *I, we, me, us, it, they, them, who, whom, that, which*. The words *who* and *whom* refer to people. *That* can refer to ideas, things, and people but usually does not refer to individuals. *Which* refers to ideas and things but never to people.

*My girlfriend gave me her best advice.* [feminine]

*Mighty Casey tried his best.* [masculine]

*The people with whom I work are loud.* [neuter]

Indefinite singular pronouns used as antecedents require, of course, singular pronouns. Handling the gender of these singular pronouns is not as obvious; opinion is divided.

1. Traditionally, writers have used the masculine form of pronouns to refer to the indefinite singular pronouns when the gender is unknown.

*Everyone should work until he drops.*
2. To avoid a perceived sex bias, use *he or she* or *his or her* instead of just *he or his*.

   *Everyone* should work until *he or she* drops.

3. Although option 1 is more direct, it is illogical to many listeners and readers, and option 2 used several times in a short passage can be awkward. To avoid those possible problems, writers often use plural forms.

   *All people* should work until *they* drop.

In any case, avoid using a plural pronoun with a singular indefinite pronoun; such usage violates the basic principle of number agreement.

   **Incorrect:** *Everyone* should do *their* best.

   **Correct:** *Everyone* should do *his or her* best.

   **Correct:** *People* should do *their* best.

### EXERCISE 12 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Gender and Number

Underline the correct pronoun for gender and number.

1. All of the people in the aerobics class were swearing through clenched teeth as *(he or she, they)* completed *(his or her, their)* five hundredth leg lift.

2. Every lifeguard at the swimming pool likes being paid as *(he or she, they)* works on *(his or her, their)* tan.

3. The Boy Scout troop was proud of *(its, their)* handiwork: a full-size cabin made entirely of popsicle sticks.

4. All employees have been instructed to always wash *(his or her, their)* hands before returning to work.

5. That woman and her husband are mulching *(his or her, their)* flower beds with cut-up credit cards.

6. A disgruntled glassblower might very well refuse to let *(their, his or her)* spouse have a Tupperware party.

7. Each mermaid will be carefully measured so that *(her, their)* scales fit properly.

8. The winners of the carnival game got to select *(his or her, their)* prizes from a smorgasbord of stuffed animals.

9. George, the human cannonball, had to admit that *(his, their)* career might be a short one.

10. Does everyone who lives in Florida paint *(his or her, their)* house pink?
EXERCISE 13 Selecting Correct Pronouns: Gender and Number

Correct the faulty pronouns for problems in gender and number.

1. A person which enjoys taking risks might become a firefighter.

2. Everyone will now pause to offer their thanks to the man who invented the air conditioner.

3. A smart motorcyclist keeps their mouth closed to avoid incoming bugs.

4. The individual which said she was abducted by aliens appeared on a news program.

5. My grandmother was one of the pioneers that lived in a sod house.

6. Practically every person is bothered by their particular pet peeve.

7. Around these parts, the wooly worm is thought to predict the severity of the upcoming winter by the thickness of their coat.

8. In the summer, a cricket can reveal the temperature if you count the number of their chirps over 15 seconds.

9. Someone which adds thirty-seven to the number of the cricket’s chirps will know exactly how hot it is in degrees Fahrenheit.

10. So far, the only thing the cockroach has been able to reveal is the lack of success of the restaurant they call home.

Pronoun Reference

A pronoun must refer clearly to its antecedent. Because a pronoun is a substitute word, it can express meaning clearly and definitely only if its antecedent is easily identified.

In some sentence constructions, gender and number make the reference clear.

Dimitri and Poloma discussed his absences and her good attendance. [gender]

If the three older boys in the club carry out those plans, it will break up. [number]

Avoid ambiguous reference. The following sentences illustrate the kind of confusion that results from structuring sentences with more than one possible antecedent for the pronoun.
Unclear: Kim gave David his money and clothes.

Clear: Kim gave his own money and clothes to David.

Unclear: Sarah told her sister that her car had a flat tire.

Clear: Sarah said to her sister, “Your car has a flat tire.”

When using a pronoun to refer to a general idea, make sure that the reference is clear. The pronouns used frequently in this way are this, that, which, and it. The best solution may be to recast the sentence to omit the pronoun in question.

Unclear: Gabriella whistled the same tune over and over, which irritated me.

Clear: Gabriella whistled the same tune over and over, a habit that irritated me.

Recast: Her whistling the same tune over and over irritated me.

EXERCISE 14 Showing Clear Pronoun References

Label each sentence as V if the pronoun reference is vague or OK if it is clear.

1. (a) The middle-aged golfers insisted on wearing knickers during the tournament, which looked ridiculous.

2. (a) During the tournament, the middle-aged golfers insisted on wearing knickers, a fashion that looked ridiculous.

3. (a) I went back to the grocery store and told the manager that my melon was moldy.

4. (a) I went back to the grocery store and told them that my melon was moldy.

5. (a) The judge sentenced him to watch reruns of the old Brady Bunch sitcom, which was unnecessarily cruel.

6. (a) The judge sentenced him to watch reruns of the old Brady Bunch sitcom, a penalty that was unnecessarily cruel.

7. (a) Carmen told her grandmother that she was in need of dance lessons.

8. (a) Carmen said to her grandmother, “I’m in need of dance lessons.”

9. (a) Her grandmother agreed with Carmen that it was indeed time for her to learn to salsa.

10. (a) Her grandmother replied that it was indeed time for Carmen to learn to salsa.

11. (a) Rex’s last tattoo covered his last few inches of available skin, which has left him without a goal and slightly depressed.
(b) Rex’s last tattoo covered his last few inches of available skin, a situation that has left him without a goal and slightly depressed.

7. (a) The zookeeper told her assistant to go clean out the lion’s cage.

(b) The zookeeper said to the assistant, “I have to go clean out the lion’s cage.”

8. (a) Jason made an appointment at the dentist’s office so that they could polish his gold tooth until it gleamed.

(b) Jason made an appointment at the dentist’s office so that the hygienist could polish his gold tooth until it gleamed.

9. (a) The twelve-year-old girl told Mrs. McDonald that she didn’t know the first thing about raising children.

(b) The twelve-year-old girl told Mrs. McDonald, “I don’t know the first thing about raising children.”

10. (a) The girls called the boys names and pelted them with mud, which inexplicably failed to stir the boys’ ardor.

(b) The girls called the boys names and pelted them with mud, all of which inexplicably failed to stir the boys’ ardor.

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**EXERCISE 15 Choosing Correct Pronouns: Reference and Agreement**

Identify and correct the problems with pronoun reference and agreement.

1. I eat fast food only three times a week, which is un-American to some.

2. The supervisors told the staff members that they would be getting a big raise.

3. If a woman is looking for quality men, you should enroll in our English class.

4. She called to find out the store’s hours, but they didn’t answer.

5. When he smashed into the pyramid of cat food with his shopping cart, it was destroyed.

6. It says in the newspaper that an elephant is on the loose.

7. I tend to submit my assignments late, which hurts my grade.
8. The Great Oz told the Tin Man that he already possessed the thing he craved most.

9. They say that the horse named Cheese Whiz may win the Triple Crown.

10. Spiderman told Superman that he may have given up on love too soon.

CHAPTER REVIEW  Pronouns

1. **Case** is the form a pronoun takes as it fills a position in a sentence.

2. **Subjective-case pronouns** are *I*, *he*, and *she* (singular) and *we* and *they* (plural). *Who* can be either singular or plural.

   Subjective-case pronouns can fill subject positions.

   *We dance in the park.*

   *It was she who spoke.* [referring back to and meaning the same as the subject]

3. **Objective-case pronouns** are *me*, *him*, and *her* (singular) and *us* and *them* (plural). *Whom* can be either singular or plural.

   Objective-case pronouns fill object positions.

   *We saw her in the library.* [object of verb]

   *They gave the results to us.* [object of a preposition]

4. Three techniques are useful for deciding which pronoun case to use.

   a. If you have a compound element (such as a subject or an object of a preposition), consider only the pronoun part.

      *They will visit you and (I, me).* [Consider: They will visit me.]

   b. If the next important word after *who* or *whom* in a statement is a noun or pronoun, the word choice will be *whom*; otherwise, it will be *who*. Disregard qualifier clauses such as *it seems* and *I feel*.

      *The person whom judges like will win.*

      *The person who works hardest will win.*

      *The person who, we think, worked hardest won.* [ignoring the qualifier clause]

   c. *Let’s* is made up of the words *let* and *us* and means "*You let us*"; therefore, when you select a pronoun to follow it, consider the two original words and select another object word—*me*.

      *Let’s you and me go to town.*
5. A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in person, number, and gender.
   a. Avoid needless shifting in person, which means shifting in point of view, such as from I to you.
      “I was having trouble. You could see disaster ahead.” Change to “I was having trouble. I could see disaster ahead.”
   b. Most problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement involve number. The principles are simple: If the antecedent (the word the pronoun refers back to) is singular, use a singular pronoun. If the antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun.
      Royce forgot his notebook.
      Many students cast their votes.
      Someone lost his or her [not their] book.
   c. The pronoun should agree with its antecedent in gender, if the gender of the antecedent is specific. Masculine and feminine pronouns are gender-specific: he, him, she, her. Others are neuter: I, we, me, us, it, they, them, who, whom, that, which. The words who and whom refer to people. That can refer to ideas, things, and people but usually does not refer to individuals. Which refers to ideas and things but not to people. To avoid a perceived sex bias, you can use he or she or his or her instead of just he or his; however, many writers simply make antecedents and pronouns plural.
      Everyone should revise his or her composition carefully.
      Students should revise their compositions carefully.

6. A pronoun must refer clearly to its antecedent. Because a pronoun is a substitute word, it can express meaning clearly and definitely only if its antecedent is easily identified.

**CHAPTER REVIEW Exercises**

**REVIEW 1**

Selecting Correct Pronouns: Case

Underline the correct pronouns.

1. Between you and (me, I), pronouns are not that difficult.
2. Those (who, whom) have much trouble may not have studied the rules.
3. Let’s you and (I, me) consider those pesky rules.
4. The opportunity offered to you and (I, me) should not be wasted.
5. (We, Us) students can learn about these pronoun problems together.
6. To (whom, who) should I give credit for my success?
7. Some of the credit should go to you and (me, I).
8. I know you didn’t study harder than (I, me).
9. Now I know that the person (who, whom) studies will prosper.
10. You and (I, me) should now celebrate.
Selecting Correct Pronouns: Person

Each of the following sentences has one or more needless changes in pronoun person. Correct each problem by crossing out the inconsistent pronoun and substituting a consistent one. Change verb form, also, if necessary.

1. Everybody knows that you should remove high heels before attempting to catch a tossed bridal bouquet.

2. All people have faults, no matter who you are.

3. He tried to give her an engagement ring with a huge stone, but one could tell that the “diamond” was imitation.

4. When the metal detector’s crackling indicates the possibility of loose change in the sand, you feel alive.

5. A job applicant should realize that smack your gum noisily while answering the interviewer’s questions is a no-no.

6. There was a time when almost every woman longed for a prince charming to whisk you away.

7. A man can never have too many trucker caps in your collection.

8. A cowboy knows that you can always depend on your trusted steed.

9. I didn’t think you could donate your brain to science.

10. An ad campaign in Paris is trying to convince the French that you should exercise less and eat more fast food.

Selecting Correct Pronouns: Number

Some of the following sentences have a problem with pronoun-antecedent number agreement. If a sentence is correct, label it C. If not, correct it.

1. The famous singing group The Village People encouraged its audience to sing along to its hit “YMCA.”

2. Trudy and the other trick-or-treaters all chose the hula dancer as her Halloween costume.

3. Someone with very large feet left their footprints at the scene of the flour factory explosion.
4. The sinister Olaf and his devilish sidekick will stop at nothing to carry out his evil plans.

5. The girls who run the drink stand refuse to reveal the secret ingredient in her lemonade.

6. There will be a stampede of determined shoppers as soon as the stores in the mall open its doors.

7. The phones began ringing in the Complaint Department when the company began using cheaper vinegar in their pickles.

8. The members of the Polar Bear Club eagerly anticipate its next plunge into icy Canadian waters.


10. None of the monkeys in the tree could be coaxed down from its perch.

**Selecting Correct Pronouns: Gender**

Correct the faulty pronoun-antecedent gender agreement in the following sentences. One sentence is correct. Rewrite the sentences as necessary.

1. An individual who does not want to get their hair wet should not sit right next to the killer whale’s tank.

2. A gambler should cash in their chips while they are ahead.

3. People shouldn’t do the crime if he or she doesn’t want to do the time.

4. André the Giant, one of the most popular wrestlers of all time, entertained their fans for many years.

5. The physicists liked to unwind by going up on the roof of his or her office building and seeing what gravity can do to a watermelon.

6. Many a bounty hunter has had to work both weekends and holidays to get their job done.

7. None of the hot dog connoisseurs could resist the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take his or her family to Frankfurt, the birthplace of the frankfurter.
8. The members of the band wanted to add some polka classics to their speed metal repertoire.

9. Each of Martha Stewart’s viewers eagerly awaits the secret to keeping their compost pile smelling lemony fresh.

10. Each and every Elvis fan hopes to make a pilgrimage to Graceland before they die.

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**REVIEW 5**

Selecting Correct Pronouns: References

Identify and correct the problems with pronoun reference.

1. He joined the Marine Corps, and that straightened him out.

2. Martin told Juan, that he needed to learn to ride a unicycle.

3. They say that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.

4. They say that senior citizens should get a flu shot every year.

5. Betty Sue told Rhonda Ann that her sauerkraut was the best in town.

6. When their son began drum lessons, they soundproofed the walls, but it still got through.

7. In the school cafeteria, you can choose among slop, gruel, or mystery meat.

8. Fay told her daughter that she was grouchy.

9. They say that time heals all wounds.

10. He told her he was planning to become a juggler, which made her laugh.

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**REVIEW 6**

Writing Sentences with Correct Pronouns

Write a sentence using each of the following words. Do not use the word as the first one in the sentence. One sentence should contain the word *between* before a pronoun such as “between you and _____.”

1. she ______________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
2. her __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

3. him __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

4. us __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

5. who __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

6. whom __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

7. me __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

8. I __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

9. they __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

10. them __________________________
    __________________________
    __________________________
    __________________________

MICROTHEME
To practice your skills acquired in this chapter, return to the Microtheme on page 151 and complete Exercise B.