



APSU Writing Center

Pronouns, Cases, and Antecedent Agreement

Pronouns, Cases, and Antecedent Agreement

Resource: *LB Brief* handbook, 5th edition, beginning on page 251.

Pronouns refer to words that replace nouns or noun phrases. An antecedent is the word or phrase which the pronoun replaces.

Pronouns can either be singular or plural, depending on if the antecedent is singular or plural. This is called number.

- **Defining Example:** Leo likes to go to the *playground* because *it* is fun.
 - (*It* is the pronoun that is taking the place of *playground*. Because the word playground is singular, the pronoun will be singular as well.)
- **Defining Example:** *Jack and Jerry* like *their* new coats.

Personal Pronouns: Pronouns can be either first, second, or third person.

- *First Person* > refers to the writer > I, we, me, my, etc.
- *Second Person* > refers to the reader > you, your, yours
- *Third Person* > refers to everyone or everything else > he, it, him, their, etc.

Case: Refers to the form that the pronoun is in depending on how it functions in the sentence.

- *Subjective* > pronouns that act as the subject of the sentence
 - **Example:** *He* is the reason that *I* know how to ice skate.
- *Possessive* > pronouns that show possession or ownership in the sentence.
 - **Example:** *His* dog is quite adorable when it wags *its* tail.
- *Objective* > pronouns that act as the object in a sentence
 - **Example:** Mom brought Jack and *me* to the baseball game.

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The pronouns *its*, *their*, and *whose* are possessive forms. Do not confuse them with the common contractions *it's* (it is), *they're* (they are), and *who's* (who is).

Personal Pronouns			
Person	Case		
Singular	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
First Person	I	me	mine
Second Person	you	you	yours
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, hers, its
Plural			
First Person	we	us	ours
Second Person	you	you	yours
Third Person	they	them	theirs

Relative Pronouns:

Special pronouns that relate an entire clause to an antecedent.

- Relative pronouns that refer to people are *who* for subjective/nominative and *whom* for objective. Relative pronouns that refer to things are *which* for either case. Relative pronouns that refer to people or things are *that* for subjective and objective and *whose* for possessive.

Tip(s):

- While writing, pronoun antecedents must always be clearly defined and identified before the pronoun can be used.
- In most academic writing, second person is generally avoided because you as the writer should not talk directly to the reader. First person is also avoided unless it is a personal narrative assignment.

Example:

- Consider changing something like:
 - When *you* write college papers, *you* should not use the second-person pronouns.
- To something like:
 - When *students* write college papers, *they* should not use the second-person pronouns.