

## Pronoun Reference, Agreement, & Point of View

### I. Pronoun Reference

Each PN must refer to *exactly one* nearby noun or PN (antecedent).

We don't shop at that store because *they* charge too much.

We don't shop at that store because *the owners* charge too much.

Ben told Randy that *he* needed to get some work done.

Ben told Randy, "You better get some work done!"

My older brother is a chef, but I'm not interested in *it*.

My older brother is a chef, but I'm not interested in *being a chef*.

Pair demonstrative PNs (*this, that*, etc) with a descriptive noun/phrase.

Gilbert and Martz noted that three out of four chimpanzees engaged in grooming before eating. *This* shows that . . . [This *what????*]

This *study* shows that . . . OR

This *pairing of grooming and eating* shows that . . .

### II. Pronoun Agreement

A PN must agree with its antecedent in *number and gender*.

**Indefinite PNs are ALWAYS SINGULAR!**

(*-one, -body*, and *-thing* words; *each, either, neither*)

*Either* of the apartments has *its* drawbacks.

*One* of the band members has lost *her* music.

With a compound antecedent, the PN agrees with the nearest antecedent.

Ex. Neither Annie nor *Astrid* got *her* work done.

Either his father or *his brothers* left *their* clothes at the hotel.

Note: Subject-Verb agreement follows the same rules—

Neither Annie nor *Astrid* *wants* to go to the gym.

Either his father or *his brothers* *need* to go with him to the library.

**Avoid sexist use of pronouns; use *his* only when referring exclusively to men.**

Problem sentence: Every citizen should know *his* rights under the law.

When faced with the problem of a (singular) indefinite PN that refers to both men and women, you have three choices:

**1. Make the antecedent plural.**

*All citizens* should know *their* rights under the law.

**2. Revise the entire sentence.**

Every citizen should have some knowledge of basic legal rights.

**3. Use the cumbersome but always correct *he and she / she and he*.**

*Every citizen* should know *his or her (her or his)* rights under the law.

III. Pronoun Point of View

1<sup>st</sup> person: I, me, my, etc.

(from the point of view of the writer, or of someone involved in the story)

2<sup>nd</sup> person: you

(from the point of view of the reader; this p.o.v is very rare and problematic)

3<sup>rd</sup> person: he, she, it, indefinite pronouns

(from the point of view of someone not involved in the story)

**Decide from which point of view you will write and NEVER change.**

Be especially careful of PN shifts when writing from 1<sup>st</sup> person p-o-v:

*I* like living in the city because *you* always have a wide variety of restaurants and entertainment to choose from.

I like living in the city because I have a wide variety of restaurants and

entertainment to choose from.

I like living in the city because it provides a wide variety of restaurants and entertainment to choose from.