WHAT IS A PRONOUN?
A pronoun is a word that refers to or takes the place of a noun.

WHAT IS AN ANTECEDENT?
The noun being referred to by the pronoun is called the antecedent. The identity of the pronoun is made clear by the antecedent.

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in **person**, **gender**, and **number**.

**Person**

Incorrect: If a **student** wants to graduate on time, **you** need to plan accordingly. (This is incorrect because the second-person pronoun “you” does not agree with the third-person antecedent “student.”)

Correct: If a **student** wants to graduate on time, **he or she** needs to plan accordingly. If **you** want to graduate on time, **you** need to plan accordingly.

**Gender**

Incorrect: If a **student** wants to make an appointment, **he** needs to sign up in the main office. (This is incorrect because you don’t know if the student is male or female.)

Correct: If a **student** wants to make an appointment, **he or she** needs to sign up in the main office.

If the **students** want to make an appointment, **they** need to sign up in the main office.

Incorrect: If the **professor** wants to cancel class, **she** may do so. (This is incorrect because you don’t know if the professor is male or female.)

Correct: If the **professor** wants to cancel class, **he or she** may do so.

If the **professors** want to cancel class, **they** may do so.
Incorrect:  If the town wants to raise money, they need to start fundraising.
(This is incorrect because the plural pronoun “they” does not agree with the singular antecedent “town.”)

Correct:  If the town wants to raise money, it needs to start fundraising.
If the townspeople want to raise money, they need to start fundraising.

Incorrect:  If the boys were smart, he would stay away from the building.
(This is incorrect because the singular pronoun “he” does not agree with the plural antecedent “boys.”)

Correct:  If the boys were smart, they would stay away from the building.
If the boy was smart, he would stay away from the building.

### Indefinite Pronoun Agreement

- **Singular indefinite pronouns** must always agree with their pronoun referents (pronouns which refer back to the indefinite pronouns). The following is a list of singular indefinite pronouns: *each, either, neither, one, no one, nobody, nothing, anyone, anybody, anything, someone, somebody, something, everyone, everybody, everything*

  Incorrect:  Each of the instructors assigns different assignments to their classes.
  (This is incorrect because the singular indefinite pronoun “each” does not agree with the plural pronoun referent “their.”)

  Correct:  Each of the instructors assigns different assignments to his or her classes.
  (This is correct because the singular indefinite pronoun “each” agrees with the singular pronoun referents “his” or “her.”)

- **Plural indefinite pronouns** must always agree with their pronoun referents. The following is a list of plural indefinite pronouns:  *both, few, many, several*

  Incorrect:  Many of my friends enjoy spending his or her summer days on the beach.
  (This is incorrect because the plural indefinite pronoun “many” does not agree with the singular pronoun referents “his” or “her.”)

  Correct:  Many of my friends enjoy spending their summer days on the beach.
  (This is correct because the plural indefinite pronoun “many” agrees with the plural pronoun referent “their.”)
Indefinite pronouns must always agree with their referent pronouns in number; however, there are some special circumstances in which an indefinite pronoun may be considered singular or plural. These indefinite pronouns (*some*, *any*, *none*, *all*, *most*) are always modified by a prepositional phrase.

⇒ If the object of the prepositional phrase which follows the indefinite pronoun cannot be counted, then the indefinite pronoun is singular and takes a singular referent pronoun.

Incorrect: Some of the water has already spilled out of *their* container.
(The object of the preposition “water” cannot be counted; therefore, the indefinite pronoun “some” is singular and must take a singular pronoun referent. This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun referent “their” is plural and does not agree.)

Correct: Some of the water has already spilled out of *its* container.
(This sentence is correct because the pronoun referent “its” is singular and agrees.)

⇒ If the object of the prepositional phrase which follows the indefinite pronoun can be counted, then the indefinite pronoun is plural and takes a plural referent pronoun.

Incorrect: None of the girls wanted to get *her* hair cut.
(The object of the preposition “girls” can be counted; therefore, the indefinite pronoun “none” is plural and must take a plural pronoun referent. This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun referent “her” is singular and does not agree.)

Correct: None of the girls wanted to get *their* hair cut.
(This sentence is correct because the pronoun referent “their” is plural and agrees.)