Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun used in a sentence should have a recognizable antecedent in the same sentence or in a preceding one. (An antecedent is the noun which the pronoun is replacing or referring to.)

1. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender.

   **Singular Pronouns:**
   - the girl: she, her, hers, herself, one, oneself
   - the boy: he, him, his, himself, one, oneself
   - the tree: it, its, itself

   **Example:** June is the girl who taught herself how to swim.

   **Plural Pronouns:**
   - the girls: they, them, their, theirs, themselves
   - the boys: they, them, their, theirs, themselves
   - the trees: they, them, their, theirs, themselves

   **Example:** The boys said that they were ready.

NOTE: There are no such words as theirselves, theirself, or hisself in Standard English.

2. The antecedent is generally never found in a prepositional phrase.

   **Each** of the students read his/her paper aloud.

3. When the antecedent is a subject joined either-or or neither-nor, use the subject closest to the verb to determine the correct pronoun.

   Either Don or his brothers will have their notes from the class.

   Neither the children nor Mary has her answers ready.

4. When the antecedent is a compound subject (two nouns joined by a coordinating conjunction, such as and, but, yet,) use a plural pronoun.

   **Jane and Tom** own their own home.

   Both the cat and dog have eaten their food.

   When the compound antecedent is joined by or and both antecedents are singular, the pronoun is singular.
Either Bob or Jim gives his speech today.

When both antecedents are plural, the pronoun is plural.

The juniors or the seniors may take their tests today.

When one antecedent is singular and the other is plural, the pronoun agrees with its closest antecedent.

Ms. Hill or the Mitchells will give their presentation.

Either the soldiers or the general will be required to submit his resignation.

5. Phrases such as one of, neither of, each of, and either of are singular antecedents and take a singular pronoun. (Notice that of actually introduces a prepositional phrase.)

One (of the girls) lost her keys.

Everyone (of the kittens) had its own distinctive cry.

Neither (of the boys) had on his coat or hat.

6. Phrases such as both of and some of generally are plural antecedents and require plural pronouns.

Some of the students had lost their books.

Both of the boys had their heads shaved.

7. Collective nouns (team, group, crowd, class) may be either singular or plural. They are plural when the speaker is thinking of the individual members of the group.

The class have agreed among themselves about their trip.

Collective nouns are singular when the speaker is thinking about the group as a unit.

The crowd made its way to the top of the hill.