Pronoun-Noun Agreement

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

When antecedents are joined by *or* or *nor*, the pronoun referring to them should match the part of the antecedent that is closest to the pronoun.

EXAMPLES: Neither her sisters nor **Jeannie** will bring **her** basketball.
Neither Jeannie nor **her sisters** will bring **their** basketball.

Pronouns as Antecedents

One of the most common mistakes in pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when the antecedent of a pronoun is, itself, a pronoun. In such cases, as with pronoun-noun agreement, the two pronouns must agree with each other in both number and gender.

INCORRECT: Those boxes have unbroken lids, but **these** need to have **its** lids replaced.
CORRECT: Those boxes have unbroken lids, but **these** need to have **their** lids replaced.

Pronoun-antecedent agreement may be especially confusing when the antecedent is an indefinite pronoun. Indefinite pronouns refer to or replace nonspecific people, places, things, or ideas. The following indefinite pronouns are always singular. Consequently, pronouns that refer to them will always be singular as well:

anybody	either	neither	somebody
anyone	everybody	nobody	someone
each	everyone	one, no one	

INCORRECT: **Everybody** needs to bring **their** assignment to class.
CORRECT: **Everybody** needs to bring **his or her** assignment to class.

Gender

Sometimes, a singular antecedent's gender is unknown, or the antecedent refers to a group composed of both males and females. To avoid gender bias, use both the masculine and feminine pronouns.

INCORRECT: **Everyone** returned **his** books to the library.
CORRECT: **Everyone** returned **his or her** books to the library.

If using *he or she* or *his or her* sounds awkward, rework your sentences whenever possible so that the antecedents of unknown or mixed gender are plural:

Awkward: **Everyone** turned in **his or her** homework and got out **his or her** textbook.
Better: **All** of the class members turned in **their** homework and got out **their** textbooks.

Correcting Faulty Agreement

When you have identified an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement, answering the following questions will help you to correct the problem:

1. Which word is the pronoun?
2. What is its antecedent?
3. Is the antecedent plural or singular?
4. Does the pronoun match the antecedent in number?
5. What is the gender of the antecedent?
6. Does the pronoun match the antecedent's gender?

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A pronoun is a word that refers to a noun and can stand in its place. By using a pronoun, you can refer to the same person, place, thing, or idea repeatedly without using the same noun every time. For example, the following sentence becomes far less awkward when pronouns are used:

WITHOUT PRONOUNS: **Molly** thinks that **Molly** should sell **Molly's** car to **Molly's** brother.
WITH PRONOUNS: **Molly** thinks that **she** should sell **her** car to **her** brother.

Pronoun Types

Pronouns may be divided into several categories, based on how they are used:

- Demonstrative (*this, that, these, those*)
- Indefinite (*anybody, something,* etc.)
- Intensive or reflexive *(yourself, herself, myself*)
- Interrogative (*who? which? what?*)
- Personal (*I, you, he, she, we, they*)
- Possessive (*my, your, her, his, their*)
- Relative (*who, whom, whose, which, that*)

Selecting the Right Pronoun

Every pronoun must agree with its antecedent (the noun to which the pronoun refers or which it replaces).

EXAMPLE: **Molly** thinks that **she** should sell **her** car.
Molly = antecedent she/her = pronouns

A pronoun agrees with its antecedent when they match in both number and gender.

Agreement in Number

A pronoun must match its antecedent in number. In other words, if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural, and if the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular.

EXAMPLE: **Freddy** wears **his** Superman outfit at least twice a week. (Since the word *Freddy* is singular, the pronoun that refers to it is also singular.)

EXAMPLE: Freddy's **parents** believe that **their** son is slightly peculiar. (Because the word *parents* is plural, the pronoun referring to it must also be plural.)

Agreement in Gender

A pronoun must match its antecedent in gender. If the antecedent is feminine, use the pronouns *she, her*, and *hers*, and if it is masculine, use the pronouns *he, him*, and *his*. Plural pronouns (*they, them, their,* and *theirs*) refer to plural nouns of either gender.

EXAMPLE: Freddy's **father** is embarrassed by **his** son.
However, Freddy's **mother** thinks **her** son is cute.
Freddy's **aunts** always take pictures of **their** nephew.
Freddy's **uncles** enjoy playing with **their** sister's superhero son.

Common Mistakes

Antecedents with Conjunctions

When singular antecedents are joined by *and*, use a plural pronoun to refer to them.

INCORRECT: **Jim and Sally** are proud of **his and her** new son.
CORRECT: **Jim and Sally** are proud of **their** new son.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the terms ‘word formation’ does not have a clear cut, universally accepted usage. It is sometimes referred to all processes connected with changing the form of the word by, for example, affixation, which is a matter of morphology. In its wider sense word formation denotes the processes of creation of new lexical units. Although it seems that the difference between morphological change of a word and creation of a new term is quite easy to perceive, there is sometimes a dispute as to whether blending is still a morphological change or making a new word. There are, of course, numerous word formation processes that do not arouse any controversies and are very similar in the majority of languages.

2. Clipping

Clipping is the word formation process which consists in the reduction of a word to one of its parts (Marchand: 1969). Clippings are, also, known as "shortenings."Clipping mainly consists of the following types:

1. Back clipping
2. Fore-clipping
3. Middle clipping
4. Complex clipping

2.1 Back clipping

Back clipping or apocopation is the most common type, in which the beginning is retained. The unclipped original may be either a simple or a composite. Examples are: *ad* (advertisement), *cable* (cablegram), *doc* (doctor), *exam* (examination), *gas* (gasoline), *math* (mathematics), *memo* (memorandum), *gym* (gymnastics, gymnasium) *mutt* (muttonhead), *pub* (public house), *pop* (popular concert), *trad* (traditional jazz), *fax* (facsimile).

2.2. Fore-clipping

Fore-clipping or aphaeresis retains the final part. Examples are: *phone* (telephone), *varsity* (university), *chute* (parachute), *coon* (racoon), *gator* (alligator), *pike* (turnpike).

2.3. Middle clipping

In middle clipping or syncope, the middle of the word is retained. Examples are: *flu* (influenza), *tec* (detective), *polly* (apollinaris), *jams* (pyjamas), *shrink* (head-shrinker).

2.4. Complex clipping

Clipped forms are also used in compounds. One part of the original compound most often remains intact. Examples are: *cablegram* (*cable* tele*gram*), *op art* (*op*tical *art*), *org-man* (*org*anization *man*), *linocut* (*lino*leum *cut*). Sometimes both halves of a compound are clipped as in *navicert* (*navi*gation *cert*ificate). In these cases it is difficult to know whether the resultant formation should be treated as a clipping or as a blend, for the border between the two types is not always clear. According to Bauer (1993), the easiest way to draw the distinction is to say that those forms which retain compound stress are clipped compounds, whereas those that take simple word stress are not. By this criterion *bodbiz, Chicom, Comsymp, Intelsat, midcult, pro-am, sci-fi*, and *sitcom* are all compounds made of clippings. According to Marchand (1969), clippings are not coined as words belonging to the standard vocabulary of a language. They originate as terms of a special group like schools, army, police, the medical profession, etc., in the intimacy of a milieu where a hint is sufficient to indicate the whole. For example, in school slang originated *exam, math, lab,* and *spec*(ulation), *tick*(et = credit) originated in stock-exchange slang, whereas *vet*(eran), *cap*(tain), are army slang. While clipping terms of some influential groups can pass into common usage, becoming part of Standard English, clippings of a socially unimportant class or group will remain groap slang.

3. Acronymy

Acronyms and initialisms are abbreviations, such as *NATO*, *laser*, and *IBM*, that are formed using the initial letters of words or word parts in a phrase or name. Acronyms and initialisms are usually pronounced in a way that is distinct from that of the full forms for which they stand: as the names of the individual letters (as in *IBM*), as a word (as in *NATO*), or as a combination (as in *IUPAC*). Another term, alphabetism, is sometimes used to describe abbreviations pronounced as the names of letters.

Examples :

- pronounced as a word, containing only initial letters:
  - FNMA: (Fannie Mae) Federal National Mortgage Association
  - laser: light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation
  - NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
  - scuba: self-contained underwater breathing apparatus

- pronounced as a word, containing non-initial letters:
  - Amphetamine: Alpha-methyl-phenethylamine
  - Gestapo: Geheime Staatspolizei ("secret state police")
  - Interpol: International Criminal Police Organization
  - radar: radio detection and ranging
- pronounced only as the names of letters
  - BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
  - DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid
  - LED: light-emitting diode
  - OB-GYN: obstetrics and gyn(a)ecology *or* obstetrician and gyn(a)ecologist
- shortcut incorporated into name
  - 3M: (*three em*) originally Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company
  - E³: (*e three*) Electronic Entertainment Exposition
  - W3C: (*double-u three cee*) World Wide Web Consortium
- recursive acronyms, in which the abbreviation itself is the expansion of one initial (particularly enjoyed by the open-source community)
  - GNU: GNU's Not Unix!
  - HURD: HIRD of Unix-Replacing Daemons, where "HIRD" stands for "HURD of Interfaces Representing Depth"
  - VISA: VISA International Service Association
  - XNA: XNA's Not Acronymed - Microsoft's new game development framework

- pseudo-acronyms are used because, when pronounced as intended, they resemble the sounds of other words:
  - ICQ: "I seek you"
  - IOU: "I owe you"
  - *OU812*: "Oh, you ate one, too?", a Van Halen album
  - CQR: "secure", a brand of boat anchor
- multi-layered acronyms:
  - GTK+: GIMP Tool Kit, *i.e.* GNU Image Manipulation Program Tool Kit, *i.e.* GNU's Not Unix Image Manipulation Program Tool Kit
  - GAIM: GTK+ AOL Instant Messenger, *i.e.* GIMP Tool Kit America OnLine Instant Messenger, *i.e.* GNU Image Manipulation Program Tool Kit America OnLine Instant Messenger, *i.e.* GNU's Not Unix Image Manipulation Program Tool Kit America OnLine Instant Messenger
  - VHDL: VHSIC Hardware Description Language, *i.e.* Very High Speed Integrated Circuits Hardware Description Language

4. Blending

A blend is a word formed from parts of two other words. These parts are sometimes, but not always, morphemes.

A blend is different from a portmanteau word in that a portmanteau refers strictly to a blending of two function words, similar to a contraction.

4.1. Formation of blendings

Most blends are formed by one of the following methods:

1. The beginning of one word is added to the end of the other. For example, *brunch* is a blend of ***br****eakfast* and *l****unch***. This is the most common method of blending.

2. The beginnings of two words are combined. For example, *cyborg* is a blend of ***cyb****ernetic* and ***org****anism*.

3. One complete word is combined with part of another word. For example, guesstimate is a blend of ***guess*** and es***timate***.

4. Two words are blended around a common sequence of sounds. For example, the word *Californication*, from a song by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, is a blend of *Cali****forni****a* and ***forni****cation*.

5. Multiple sounds from two component words are blended, while mostly preserving the sounds' order. Poet Lewis Carroll was well known for these kinds of blends. An example of this is the word *slithy*, a blend of ***lithe*** and ***sli**my*. This method is difficult to achieve and is considered a sign of Carroll's verbal wit.

When two words are combined in their entirety, the result is considered a compound word rather than a blend. For example, bagpipe is a compound, not a blend,

5. Back-formation

Back-formation refers to the process of creating a new lexeme (less precisely, a new "word") by removing actual or supposed affixes. The resulting neologism is called a *back-formation*. Back-formations are shortened words created from longer words, thus back-formations may be viewed as a sub-type of clipping.

For example, the noun *resurrection* was borrowed from Latin, and the verb *resurrect* was then backformed hundreds of years later from it by removing the *-ion* suffix. This segmentation of *resurrection* into *resurrect* + *ion* was possible because English had many examples of Latinate words that had verb and verb+*-ion* pairs — in these pairs the *-ion* suffix is added to verb forms in order to create nouns (such as, *insert/insertion*, *project/projection*, etc.).

Back formation may be similar to the reanalyses of folk etymologies when it rests on an erroneous understanding of the morphology of the longer word. For example, the singular noun *asset* is a back-formation from the plural *assets*. However, *assets* is originally not a plural; it is a loan-word from Anglo-Norman *asetz* (modern French *assez*). The *-s* was reanalyzed as a plural suffix.

5.1. Back-formation in the English language

Many words came into English by this route: *Pease* was once a mass noun but was reinterpreted as a plural, leading to the back-formation *pea*. The noun *statistic* was likewise a back-formation from the field of study *statistics*. In Britain the verb *burgle* came into use in the 19th century as a back-formation from *burglar* (which can be compared to the North America verb *burglarize* formed by suffixation).

Even though many English words are formed this way, new coinages may sound strange, and are often used for humorous effect. For example, *gruntled* or *pervious* (from *disgruntled* and *impervious*) would be considered mistakes today, and used only in humorous contexts. The comedian George Gobel regularly used original back-formations in his humorous monologues. Bill Bryson mused that the English language would be richer if we could call a tidy-haired person *shevelled* - as an opposite to *dishevelled*.

Frequently back-formations begin in colloquial use and only gradually become accepted. For example, *enthuse* (from *enthusiasm*) is gaining popularity, though it is still considered substandard by some today.

The immense celebrations in Britain at the news of the relief of the Siege of Mafeking briefly created the verb *to maffick*, meaning to celebrate both extravagantly and publicly. "Maffick" was a back-formation from *Mafeking*, a place-name that was treated humorously as a gerund or participle.

6. Derivation

Derivation is used to form new words, as with *happi-ness* and *un-happy* from *happy*, or *determination* from *determine*. A contrast is intended with the process of inflection, which uses another kind of affix in order to form variants of the same word, as with *determine/determine-s/determin-ing/determin-ed*.

A derivational suffix usually applies to words of one syntactic category and changes them into words of another syntactic category. For example, the English derivational suffix *-ly* changes adjectives into adverbs (*slow* → *slowly*).

Some examples of English derivational suffixes:

- adjective-to-noun: *-ness* (*slow* → *slowness*)
- adjective-to-verb: *-ize* (*modern* → *modernize*)
- noun-to-adjective: *-al* (*recreation* → *recreational*)
- noun-to-verb: *-fy* (*glory* → *glorify*)

- verb-to-adjective: *-able* (*drink* → *drinkable*)
- verb-to-noun: *-ance* (*deliver* → *deliverance*)

Although derivational affixes do not necessarily modify the syntactic category, they modify the meaning of the base. In many cases, derivational affixes change both the syntactic category and the meaning: *modern* → *modernize* ("to make modern"). The modification of meaning is sometimes predictable: *Adjective + ness* → *the state of being (Adjective)*; (*stupid* → *stupidness*).

A prefix (*write* → *re-write*; *lord* → *over-lord*) will rarely change syntactic category in English. The derivational prefix *un-* applies to adjectives (*healthy* → *unhealthy*), some verbs (*do* → *undo*), but rarely nouns. A few exceptions are the prefixes en- and be-. En- (em- before labials) is usually used as a transitive marker on verbs, but can also be applied to adjectives and nouns to form transitive verb: *circle* (verb) → *encircle* (verb); but *rich* (adj) → *enrich* (verb), *large* (adj) → *enlarge* (verb), *rapture* (noun) → *enrapture* (verb), *slave* (noun) → *enslave* (verb). The prefix be-, though not as productive as it once was in English, can function in a similar way to en- to mark transitivity, but can also be attached to nouns, often in a causative or privative sense: *siege* (noun) → *besiege* (verb), *jewel* (noun) → *bejewel* (verb), *head* (noun) → *behead* (verb).

Note that derivational affixes are bound morphemes. In that, derivation differs from compounding, by which *free* morphemes are combined (*lawsuit*, *Latin professor*). It also differs from inflection in that inflection does not change a word's syntactic category and creates not new lexemes but new word forms (*table* → *tables*; *open* → *opened*).

Derivation may occur without any change of form, for example *telephone* (noun) and *to telephone*. This is known as conversion. Some linguists consider that when a word's syntactic category is changed without any change of form, a null morpheme is being affixed.

7. Borrowing

Borrowing is just taking a word from another language. The borrowed words are called loan words. A loanword (or *loan word*) is a word directly taken into one language from another with little or no translation. By contrast, a calque or loan translation is a related concept whereby it is the meaning or idiom that is borrowed rather than the lexical item itself. The word *loanword* is itself a calque of the German *Lehnwort*. Loanwords can also be called "borrowings".

7.1. Loanwords in English

English has many loanwords. In 1973, a computerized survey of about 80,000 words in the old Shorter Oxford Dictionary (3rd edition) was published in Ordered Profusion by Thomas Finkenstaedt and Dieter Wolff. Their estimates for the origin of English words were as follows:

- French, including Old French and early Anglo-French: 28.3%
- Latin, including modern scientific and technical Latin: 28.24%
- Germanic languages, including Old and Middle English: 25%
- Greek: 5.32%
- No etymology given or unknown: 4.03%
- Derived from proper names: 3.28%
- All other languages contributed less than 1%

However, if the frequency of use of words is considered, words from Old and Middle English occupy the vast majority.

Examples:

Biology, boxer ,ozone from German

Jacket,yoghurt,kiosh from Turkish

Pistl,robot from Czech

9. Compounding

A compound is a lexeme (a word) that consists of more than one other lexeme. An endocentric compound consists of a *head*, i.e. the categorical part that contains the basic meaning of the whole compound, and modifiers, which restrict this meaning. For example, the English compound *doghouse*, where *house* is the head and *dog* is the modifier, is understood as a house intended for a dog. Endocentric compounds tend to be of the same part of speech (word class) as their head, as in the case of *doghouse*. (Such compounds were called *karmadharaya* in the Sanskrit tradition.)

Exocentric compounds do not have a head, and their meaning often cannot be transparently guessed from its constituent parts. For example, the English compound *white-collar* is neither a kind of collar nor a white thing. In an exocentric compound, the word class is determined lexically, disregarding the class of the constituents. For example, a *must-have* is not a verb but a noun. English language allows several types of combinations of different word classes:

N + N lipstick , teapot

A + N fast food , soft drink

V + N breakfast , sky-dive

N + V sunshine , babysit

N + A capital-intensive , waterproof

A + A deaf-mute , bitter-sweet

Like derivational rules, compounding rules may differ in productivity. In English, the N + N rule/pattern is extremely productive, so that novel compounds are created all he time and are hardy noticed. By contrast, the V + N rule/pattern is unproductive and limited to a few lexically listed items. Apart from endocentric and exocentric compounds there is another type of compound which requires an interpretation different from the ones introduced so far. Consider the hyphenated words in the examples below:

a. singer-songwriter

scientist-explorer

poet-translator

hero-martyr

b. the doctor-patient gap

the nature-nurture debate

a modifier-head structure

the mind-body problem