

Pronouns and Antecedents

The Pronoun

2b. A **pronoun** is a word that is used in place of one or more nouns or pronouns.

We often use pronouns to avoid repeating a name or a word many times in a row.

EXAMPLES Did Ken say Ken found Ken's coat?

Did Ken say **he** found **his** coat? [The pronouns *he* and *his* replace *Ken* and *Ken's*.]

The singers warmed up the singers' voices until the teacher joined the singers.

The singers warmed up **their** voices until the teacher joined **them**. [The pronouns *their* and *them* replace *singers'* and *singers*.]

Someone left someone's library card in this book.

Someone left **his or her** library card in this book. [The compound pronoun *his or her* replaces *someone's*.]

EXERCISE A Underline each pronoun in the following sentences. Some sentences have more than one pronoun.

Examples 1. Did Lorenzo say how he broke his arm? [*He* and *his* are used in order not to repeat *Lorenzo*.]

2. The hamster ran on its exercise wheel. [*Its* is used in order not to repeat *hamster*.]

1. Rob noticed a friendly dog behind him. [Which word is used in place of *Rob*?]
2. The volleyball player enjoyed a cool drink of water after her game. [Which word is used in place of *player*?]
3. The castle had a deep moat at its base.
4. We discussed our weekend plans.
5. Eddie and Marisa carried snacks and water with them.
6. Linda asked her to help with the party arrangements.
7. Nick and Jake helped themselves to the delicious dinner.
8. The police officers always have their radios with them.
9. Students, did you write your name at the top of the test?
10. Mr. Raskin said, "I enjoy the discussions with my students."

The Antecedent

The word or word group that a pronoun stands for (or refers to) is called its *antecedent*.

TIP To find the antecedent, ask yourself *who* or *what* the pronoun stands for.

EXAMPLES ^{antecedent} Antonio, where did ^{pronoun} you get ^{pronoun} your skateboard? [The pronouns *you* and *your* stand for *Antonio* and *Antonio's*.]
^{antecedent} The dog is shedding ^{pronoun} its fur all over the furniture. [The pronoun *its* stands for *dog's*.]

Sometimes the antecedent is not stated. Here are some reasons why you might not use an antecedent.

- You might not use an antecedent when you are talking or writing about yourself or when you are talking or writing to someone in particular. The audience already knows who you are and who they are.

EXAMPLE I'll join **you** for a swim in the lake. [*I* refers to the speaker, and *you* refers to the person spoken to.]

- Sometimes, you don't know what the antecedent is, such as when you ask a question.

EXAMPLE **Who** sent you that postcard? [The speaker doesn't know who *who* is.]

- Indefinite pronouns such as *someone*, *everybody*, and *many* are often used without antecedents.

EXAMPLE **Everyone** enjoyed art class today. [The indefinite pronoun *Everyone* does not have an antecedent.]

EXERCISE B Draw an arrow from the underlined pronoun to its antecedent in each of the following sentences. If the antecedent is not stated, write *none* on the line provided.

Example _____ 1. Did Joyce say when she earned her black belt? [*She* stands for *Joyce*.]

_____ 11. The goldfish quickly ate its food. [What does *its* stand for?]

_____ 12. The firefighters put away their equipment. [What does *their* stand for?]

_____ 13. Would you help me with dinner tonight?

_____ 14. Maureen said, "I teach an aerobics class each Tuesday evening."

_____ 15. Jason, the poem you wrote has wonderful imagery!