

# PRONOUNS



A pronoun is simply a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence. We use pronouns all the time in speech and in writing: I, he, she, it, they, we, and so on. Really, any word that fills in for a noun is a pronoun.

The key to knowing how to correctly use pronouns in a sentence and to spotting and correcting pronoun-related errors on the SAT is to internalize the rule that **a pronoun must always match its antecedent**.

What's an antecedent? Simply put, an antecedent is the noun a pronoun stands in for. Here's an example:

*Jason took his dog to the vet.*

“Jason” is the noun, and “his” is the pronoun standing in for “Jason.”

Pretty simple.

As long as the pronoun and antecedent match, or agree, you're in good shape. The pronoun-related questions you're likely to encounter on the SAT will require you to identify and fix mismatched pronouns and antecedents. And the best way to do this is to first identify the antecedent and then see if the antecedent matches. Doing so can be challenging, especially when dealing with long, complex sentences with multiple pronouns and antecedents.

Take a look at the following sentence:

*Due to Nancy and **her** sister's constant complaining, **their** dad threatened to not let **them** go to the party Saturday night and to take away **our** phones.*

As you can see this sentence contains four pronouns ... but one of them is incorrect! Let's break each pronoun and its antecedent.

First “her” = Nancy

“Their” = Nancy and her sister

“Them” = Nancy of her sister

“Our” = Nancy and her sister

You can probably tell which pronoun-antecedent pair doesn't match, right? “Our” stands in for Nancy and her sister, but because “Our” is a first person pronoun (first person plural, to be specific), it doesn't fit with the rest of the pronouns, which are all third person.

The sentence *should* read:

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Due to Nancy and **her** sister's constant complaining, **their** dad threatened to not let **them** go to the party Saturday night and to take away **their** phones.

The above error is an example of a pronoun-antecedent disagreement in person (as in 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person).

Here's another example:

**My** friends, Andy and Jackson, left **their** books at **my** house. **Their** mom called **my** mom who asked if **she** could have me bring **it** to school tomorrow.

Once again, there are lots of pronouns at play. The only one that's a problem is the last one: "it." What's the issue? Well, if you scan back through the sentence, you can see that the antecedent for "it" is the plural noun "books." And so, "it" should be "them." What makes it tricky is that the pronoun and antecedent in question are spaced far apart in the sentence. But as long as you're aware of how the antecedents and pronouns match up, you should be able to spot these types of errors.

One final example:

Did **you** ask **your** teacher if **they** will let **you** make up the test **you** missed?

The troublesome pronoun is "they," because "teacher" is singular and "they" is plural. You may be tempted to go with a plural pronoun because you don't know if the teacher is a "he" or a "she." But doing so is technically wrong, and certainly wrong on the SAT. So, instead, you have to use a singular pronoun: "he," "she," or "he or she":

## Main Takeaway

As mentioned above, the key to dealing with pronoun-related errors is to make sure that the pronoun and antecedent match. When you're presented with a sentence that includes pronouns, first find the relevant antecedents and then check to see if the pronouns and antecedents agree.