Writing Center WORKSHOP EVALUATION. Please take the time to fill this out; you can hand it in at the end of the workshop or leave it in Academic Success. Thanks again.

WORKSHOP: ___Clear & Concise______ DATE:

1. Something I enjoyed about today’s workshop:

2. The most important thing I learned in the workshop:

3. Would you change something to improve the workshop for next time?

4. General comments about presenter or workshop . . .
Workshop: Clear and Concise Writing

I. Pronoun Agreement,

II. Pronoun Case

III. Subject-Verb Agreement
I. PRONOUN Agreement

Rule 1: Every pronoun must have a *conspicuous antecedent*
Example: In the professor’s lecture, she did not address the opposition *should be* In her lecture, the professor did not address the opposition. Failure to communicate to your reader which noun the pronoun refers to is called *vague pronoun reference*.
Let’s clarify the terms: Something that is *conspicuous* is clear and evident. An *antecedent* is something that comes before. So, we want our pronoun to refer to something clear and evident that comes before or after it.

Rule 2: Every pronoun must agree with its antecedent in *number* (singular or plural), *gender* (masculine, feminine, or neutral) and *person* (1st, 2nd, 3rd). For native speakers of English, agreement in gender (male/female) and person (I, you, he, etc.) is rarely if ever a problem. This situation concerns *noun-pronoun agreement* in number (singular or plural).

A. Pronoun Agreement: Number

Most of the time the situation is pretty straightforward, but we often see mistakes in number, where a plural pronoun is used when the subject is singular, or vice versa.
Conspicuous antecedent and Pronoun Agreement

Number Exercises: Correct the mistakes in the examples below; if there is no mistake, leave as is.

1. Every car owner should make sure that their car insurance is up to date. (rule 2)
2. When people meet a transsexual they are often not sure which pronoun to use when addressing them. (rule 2)
3. A writer, taking into consideration how few people have read their book, should do more publicity. (rule 2)
4. A strange car followed us closely, and he kept blinking his lights at us. (rule 1)
5. At the job placement office, they told me to stop wearing ripped jeans to my interviews. (rule 1)

Gender Neutral: In the cases where we had to use he/she, his/her, etc. what techniques can we use to avoid this?
   1. Use this pattern occasionally.
   2. Make the subject plural.
   3. Repeat the word instead of replacing it with a pronoun.
   4. Avoid pronouns all together by rephrasing the sentence.

Rewrite the first example above to avoid the need to use masculine and feminine pronouns.

1.

B. PRONOUN AGREEMENT: Indefinite Pronouns
   Are they singular or plural? Well, it depends. See table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEFINITE PRONOUNS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular or Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are a few examples illustrating challenging uses of the indefinite pronoun.

1. When someone has been drinking, he or she is likely to speed.
2. Everyone in the room closed his or her book immediately.
3. Neither man finished his work on time.
4. Either the plaintiffs or the defendants must change their strategy in order to win the argument.
5. Any student who feels he or she has been discriminated against should make a complaint at once.

► Exercises for Indefinite Pronoun Number Agreement:

Fill in the correct pronoun in the chart below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Any and all may state…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Anyone who does not agree may now give…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Few of the witnesses told…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Several wanted to change…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The professor asked everyone to take…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. He swore he would return none of the gold he found in the shipwreck to owner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Not one of the students turned in papers on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If you like any of the material, require the workers to use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. PRONOUN AGREEMENT: AND vs. OR

**Rule 1**: Singular or plural antecedents connected by *and* take a plural pronoun:
*Giving the testimony and evidence their due, the jury found the defendant not guilty.*

**Rule 2**: Compound singular antecedents connected by *or* take a singular pronoun:
*Bruce or Hamilton should receive the prize for his poem.*

**Rule 3**: Compound antecedents connected by *or*, *either/or*, or *nor*, *neither/nor*, agree with the nearest antecedent (use the plural one in this position):
*He sent neither the woman nor her children their support check.*

D. PRONOUN AGREEMENT: Collective Nouns

**Rule 1**: Treat collective nouns as *singular* unless the meaning is *clearly plural*: Ask yourself if the noun functions as a unit or as individuals.
(Examples of collective nouns: committee, board of directors, team, jury, audience, crowd, class, couple etc.)

**Examples**:
1. The committee granted *its* permission to build
2. The committee put *their* signatures on the document.
3. The jury has reached *its* decision
4. The jury gave interviews to the press about *their* decision. (In this sentence the subject “jurors” would be much better and avoid confusion.)

► **Exercises for Pronoun Agreement:**
and vs. or & Collective Nouns.
Correct the following sentences where necessary.

1. I don’t care whether you give Harriet or Celia the money, but give it to them soon!

2. I don’t care whether you give Harriet or Patrick the money, but give it to them soon!
3. The committee is/are unable to agree on the location of the meeting.

4. After examining the testimony transcripts and the evidence, the judge turned it over to the attorney.

5. The audience stamped its feet.

6. The teacher ignored the class’s questions, and refused to answer it.

7. The court gave their decision very quickly.

II. PRONOUN CASE

A pronoun must agree in case with its antecedent. The question of whether to use *I* or *me*, *who* or *whom* concerns case, and is a question students are often not sure of. Which one to use depends on the case of the pronoun, that is, the function it has in the sentence. There are three cases: nominative, objective, and possessive. Here we will be concerning ourselves with the first two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Nominative (or subjective) case</th>
<th>Objective case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Always the same | Relative pronoun | Who | Whom

**Rule 1**: A pronoun is in the **nominative** case if

1) it is the subject of a sentence
   • *I am the master of my fate.*

2) it is in apposition\(^1\) to the subject:
   • *Two students, Marjorie and *I*, shared the prize for worst hairdo.*

3) it is a predicate nominative/subject complement (usually after some form of the verb “to be”):
   • *The lawyers nominated for the award were *he* and *I*.*

4) it is the subject of a subordinate clause
   • *The officer *who* reported the accident was not able to testify.*

5) it is the complement of the infinitive “to be” with no expressed subject:
   • *I would not want to be *he*.*

6) it is the subject of an elliptical clause
   • *She has more trial experience than *I* [do].*

**Rule 2**: A pronoun is in the **objective** case if

1) it is the direct object of a sentence
   • *The court summoned *me* to testify.*

2) it is the object of a preposition
   • *Just between *you* and *me*, I’m confused.*

3) it is the indirect object of a sentence
   • *The judge gave *him* 60 days probation.*

4) it is the appositive of a direct object.
   • *The committee elected two delegates, my best friend and *me*.*

5) it is the object of an infinitive

\(^1\) Placing of a word in syntactic parallelism with another.
Huckleberry Finn’s friends wanted to help him paint the fence.

6) it is the object of a gerund
   • Helping me is not always an easy task.

7) it is the object of an elliptical clause
   • The court sentenced him to more time than [it sentenced] me [to].

Read the following elliptical sentences and explain the difference in meaning. Both are correct.

1a. I am surprised that our dog likes our neighbor more than I.

1b. I am surprised that our dog likes our neighbor more than me.

Exercises: Pronoun Case

Choose the correct pronoun and discuss why you chose it. Think for a moment about whether the example is nominative or objective.

1. The boy ran away from home because his stepfather and he/him had quarreled.

2. During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that the kidnapper was he/him.

3. It was a traumatic experience for my friend and I/me.

4. We are much better off than they/them.

5. Ms. Wilson asked John and I/me to drive the senator and she/her to the airport.

6. He tells the story to whoever/whomever will listen.

7. Who/Whom did you enter into the contract with?

III. Subject Verb Agreement

The verb must agree with the subject of a sentence. Although not usually a problem, there may at times be confusion, just as with pronoun agreement.
Rules & Examples:
1. Two subjects connected by *and* take pl. verb)
   - John and I *are* friends.

2. Indefinite pronoun subject *one* is singular
   - When one *speaks* six languages, one is called a polyglot.

3. Collective noun subject by default singular
   - The family *knows* how to cope with adversity.
   - Delmonico Brothers *discriminates* in its hiring practices.

4. Two subjects connected with *or*/*nor*, verb agrees with nearest subject
   --- Either Mr. Phillips or Ms. Phantom *has* to decide.

5. Collective noun subject where elements are considered as a group of individuals takes plural verb
   - The police *are* searching for the kidnapped child.

6. Subject at end of sentence takes appropriate verb
   - At the back of the room *are* the family and friends of the defendant.

7. Verb agrees with subject, not subject compliment
   - A major force in today’s economy *is* minorities.

8. Singular indefinite pronoun takes singular verb
   - Every one of the cases *relates* in one way or another to our case.

9. Plural form considered as one singular unit
   - Statistics² is among the most difficult courses required for this major.

10. Subject describes separate items and is thus plural
    - The statistics on child abuse *are* appalling.

► Exercises: Subject Verb Agreement

First underline the subject and verb then choose the correct verb in the following sentences.

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² Similar words are athletics, economics, mathematics, physics, measles, mumps, news.
1. Your friendship over the years and your support on a wide variety of issues (has/have) meant a great deal to us.

2. The main source of income for Trinidad (is/are) oil and pitch.

3. Neither the professor nor her assistant (was/were) able to solve the mystery of the disappearing ethyl alcohol.

4. Measles (is/are) a contagious childhood disease.

5. The board of directors, ignoring the wishes of the neighborhood, (has/have) voted to allow further development.

6. The shelter for battered women (has/have) no available space at present.

**Milasker eta bukatu da, nere lagunak**