A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. Many pronouns have antecedents (a word, phrase, or clause that is replaced by a pronoun or other substitute in the same or surrounding sentences). An antecedent is merely the noun to which a pronoun is referring. A pronoun and its antecedent agree when they are both singular or both plural.

The pronouns he, she, and it (and their possessive counterparts—his, her, and its) must agree in gender (masculine, feminine, or neutral) with their antecedents.

Example: Jane lost a glove, and she can’t find it.

In this sentence, Jane is the antecedent of she, and glove is the antecedent of it.

Indefinite Pronouns
Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. Even though some of the following may seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular in formal English text.

Example: Everyone discusses his or her thoughts.

When a plural pronoun mistakenly refers to a singular indefinite pronoun, you can usually choose one of three options for revision:

- Replace the plural pronoun with “he or she” (or “his or her”)
- Make the antecedent plural
- Rewrite the sentence so that no problem of agreement exists

Collective Nouns
Collective nouns like jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, team, and couple name a class or group. Ordinarily, the group functions as a unit, so the noun should be treated as singular; however, if the members of the group function as individuals, the noun should be treated as plural.

Unit: The committee granted its permission to build.

Individuals: The committee put their signatures on the document.
**Compound Antecedents**
Treat most compound antecedents joined by and as plural.

Example: *Joanne and John moved to the mountains, where they built a log cabin.*

Compound antecedents joined by or and nor make the pronoun agree with the **nearest**
antecedent.

Example: *Either Sheila or James should receive first prize for his sculpture.*

Example: *Neither the mouse nor the rats could find their way through the maze.*

**Common Errors**

Example: *Don told Kate and I that he bought a new puppy.*

Example: *Kate and me went to the store on Saturday with Don.*

At first glance, you may wonder what is wrong with these sentences. However, it is a
common mistake to overcorrect oneself and say *I* and *me* where it is inappropriate.
When confused, read the sentence using only the pronoun instead of the noun and
pronoun phrase: *Don told I* and *Me went to the store.* If the sentences sound unnatural
or choppy, you’ve likely misused a pronoun object for a pronoun subject or vice-versa.
To correctly use pronouns in the examples above, insert *me* into the first sentence and *I*
into the second sentence:

Example: *Don told Kate and me that he bought a new puppy.*

Example: *Kate and I went to the store on Saturday with Don.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns that function as the subject:</th>
<th>Pronouns that function as the object:</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
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In the sentence, *Don told Kate and me that he bought a new puppy,*” *Don* is the noun
subject of the sentence, and *Kate* and *me* are the noun and pronoun objects. In the
sentence, “You gave me a present,” *you* is the pronoun subject (the person or thing
performing the action), and *me* is the pronoun object (the person or thing receiving the action).

Information on this handout borrowed from:
The Longwood Guide to Writing (Second Edition) by Ronald F. Lunsford and Bill Bridges.