

rested in the early afternoon. Unless it is a one-person operation, a company usually employs many people. However, *it* is treated like a singular noun. In the first sentence, the singular pronoun *it* substitutes for *company*. In the second sentence, individuals in the company feel separately, and so the plural pronoun *they* replaces the subject.

- ✓ Persons receive the pronouns *who*, *whom*, or *whose*, not *that* or *which*.

- ✓ After *is*, *are*, *was*, or *were* use the subjective case.
- ✓ Pronouns preceding or following *infinitive verbs* (the plain form of a verb preceded by *to*) take the objective case. → *Billy Jean begged him to play catch, but he did not want to play ball with her at that moment.* In the first clause, *him* is the subject; in the second clause, *her* is an object. Despite their difference, both take the objective case because of the infinitive *to play*.

Agreement is a very important step in constructing a coherent sentence. There are three basic agreements in a sentence: subject-verb agreement, tense agreement, and antecedent-pronoun agreement.

First, you have to know the definition of a verb:

- ✓ Verb: a word or group of words describing the action or the state of being of a subject.

Subject-Verb Agreement

- ✓ If the subject is singular, the verb is singular; if the subject is plural, the verb is plural → *Mrs. Hendrickson feeds the birds every day.* Or: *The Hendrickses feed the birds every day.*
- ✓ Subjects joined by *and* are plural and receive a plural verb → *Jolie and Lara swim together every Thursday.*
- ✓ Subjects joined by *or* or *nor* adopt the singularity or plurality of the last subject; accordingly, the verb matches it → *Either that cat or those dogs have been eating my snacks!*

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- ✓ *Each*, *either*, *neither*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *no one*, *nobody*, *one*, *somebody*, and *someone* are singular pronouns and receive singular verbs.
- ✓ *Both*, *few*, *many*, and *several* are plural pronouns and receive plural verbs.
- ✓ *All*, *any*, *most*, *none*, and *some* can be singular or plural pronouns, depending on their use. These pronouns can receive plural or singular verbs.
- ✓ Do not be confused by words or phrases that follow a subject that are not the subject → *One of the chairs is damaged.*

His work, one of the many works exhibited here today, is refreshingly naive.

Tense Agreement

- ✓ Maintain one tense in a complete thought: past tense or present tense. →

Incorrect: *In the game of hide and seek, Bobby chased Mary and tag her from behind.*

Correct: *In the game of hide and seek, Bobby chased Mary and tagged her from behind.*

Incorrect: *Dusk had just settled when I see a fawn timidly step onto the beach.*

Correct: *Dusk had just settled when I saw a fawn timidly step onto the beach.*

Do not use *of* in place of *have*.

You cannot avoid pronouns. *Pronouns* substitute for nouns. Instead of saying, "Because Janie was late, Janie hopped on Janie's moped, and Janie raced to the wedding," you would say, "Because Janie was late, *she* hopped on *her* moped, and *she* raced to the wedding."

In this section, you will not only clarify ambiguous pronouns and assure pronoun-antecedent agreement, you will also grapple with contractions. All too often, certain pronouns and contractions are confused. "The file cabinet drawer snagged on an overstuffed folder; *it's* now stuck just before *its* halfway point." *It's* is a contraction meaning *it is*, while *its* is a possessive pronoun meaning the drawer's halfway point. The only visual difference between the two is an apostrophe neatly inserted between the *t* and the *s* in the contraction.

Do You Know These Terms?

- ✓ **Antecedent:** In the last example, Janie is the specific noun that *she* and *her* replace; so Janie is the *antecedent*. The presence of the antecedent in a sentence is as important as which pronouns substitute for it.
- ✓ **Contractions:** When two words are made into one by omitting letters and using an apostrophe to highlight the omission—that's a contraction.

- ✓ **Subjective, Objective, and Possessive Cases:** Persons or things (nouns) acting on other things are subjects. Pronouns that refer to these subjects are in the subjective case (*I, you, he, she, we, they, who*). Persons or things acted upon (in other words, they are not performing the action) are objects. Pronouns that refer to these objects are in the objective case (*me, you, him, her, us, them, whom*). Subjects or objects that claim ownership of something are possessors. Pronouns that claim their possessions are in the possessive case (*my, your, his, her, our, your, whose*).

- ✓ **Avoid Ambiguous Pronoun References.** The antecedent that a pronoun refers to must be clearly stated and in close proximity to its pronoun.

If more subjects than one are present, indicate which subject is the antecedent. → *When Katherine and Melissa left for England, she promised to write me about all their adventures. Who is she? Katherine or Melissa?*

Pronouns should

- ✓ Agree in number with their antecedent: Singular antecedents use singular pronouns, and plural antecedents use plural pronouns.
- ✓ **Compound antecedents** joined by *and* use plural pronouns. → *A horse and a donkey make a mule.* Even though the horse and the donkey are singular subjects, together they create one plural subject.
- ✓ **Compound antecedents** joined by *or* or *nor* use pronouns that agree with the nearest antecedent. → *Neither my one cat nor my four dogs are as difficult to maintain as my one pet fish.*
- ✓ **Collective nouns** use singular pronouns unless it is obvious that every person or thing in the group act individually. → *The company mandated a universal naptime for all its employees. They felt workers could sustain productivity longer into the afternoon if they*