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Scavenger Hunt: Pronouns

Directions: Review the tips for using pronouns. Then complete the scavenger hunt below. You'll be hunting through the March 2018 issue of *Scope*.

Tips for Using Pronouns

1. Use pronouns as substitutes for nouns.

For instance, if you're telling a story about your dog Max, the story will begin to sound repetitive if you keep repeating "Max" over and over again:

Max loves squeaky toys. Max takes a squeaky octopus with Max to bed every night.

Instead, you could use the pronouns *he* and *him* to refer to Max:

Max loves squeaky toys. He takes a squeaky octopus to bed with him every night.

2. Make sure your reader isn't left wondering to whom or what your pronoun refers.

In the following sentence, the pronoun *they* is vague—you can't tell if it refers to the salad *and* the fries or just the fries:

I ordered a salad and french fries, and they were delicious.

Here's a way to make the sentence clear:

I ordered a salad and french fries, and the fries were delicious.

3. Make sure a pronoun agrees with the noun it is replacing in number, gender, and person (first-person, second-person, or third-person).

Obviously, you wouldn't say this to describe a bunch of pencils:

If you are finished using those pencils, please put it back in the box.

You would say this:

If you are finished using those pencils, please put them back in the box.

1. Go to page 9 in "Blood, Smoke, and Freedom." In the first paragraph of the section "Cover of Darkness," what pronoun is used and to whom or what does it refer?

2. Now look at the third paragraph of the section "Cover of Darkness." To whom do the pronouns *they* and *their* refer?

3. Go to page 14 in "Swarms of Terror."
Read the first paragraph on that page.

What would happen if "Laura's father"
were changed to "her father"?

4. Still on page 14, go to the third column
and read the paragraph that begins "The
whirs and clicks and buzzes . . ."

What would happen if "Grasshoppers
buzzed in Laura's ears" were changed to
"Grasshoppers buzzed in her ears"?

5. Write a paragraph about the most interesting thing you learned from the March 2018 issue of
Scope. Your paragraph should include at least four pronouns.

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Pronoun Power

A *pronoun* is a word that replaces a noun. The noun or noun phrase that the pronoun refers to or replaces is the *antecedent*. Check out the following sentence:

George was racing down the street when he crashed and flew off his bicycle.

The pronouns *he* and *his* refer to *George*, so the antecedent is *George*.

A pronoun must agree with, or match, its antecedent in:

number (a singular pronoun replaces a singular noun; a plural pronoun replaces a plural noun)

person (referring to first, second, or third person)

gender (*he, him, or his* replaces a masculine noun; *she, her, or hers* replaces a feminine noun)

There are a few situations that can trip you up if you are not careful. Watch out for:

1. Indefinite pronouns (pronouns that refer to unknown people, places, or things) as antecedents

These words are always replaced by
a **singular** pronoun:

<i>each</i>	<i>anybody</i>	<i>nothing</i>	<i>everyone</i>
<i>either</i>	<i>anything</i>	<i>someone</i>	<i>everybody</i>
<i>neither</i>	<i>no one</i>	<i>somebody</i>	<i>everything</i>
<i>anyone</i>	<i>nobody</i>	<i>something</i>	

Examples:

Each girl who danced wore a flower in her hair.

Everyone should proofread his or her work
before handing it in.

These words are always replaced by
a **plural** pronoun:

both *few* *many* *several*

Examples:

Many are still waiting for their lucky break.

Several promised me that they would be there.

2. Phrases that come after the antecedent. Don't let them confuse you! Identify the antecedent and make sure the pronoun agrees with it. For example:

The collection of paintings is on display at the museum. It will be there until June.

It refers to *collection*, and *collection* is singular.

The soccer team, made up of players from all over the state, won its final match.

Its refers to *team*, and *team* is singular.

An activity to test your pronoun power is on the next page.

Directions: In each sentence or pair of sentences below, identify the antecedent to which the underlined pronoun refers. We did the first one for you.

1. If you are finished using those pencils, please put them back in the box.

antecedent: pencils

2. A few arrived early. They are waiting outside.

antecedent: _____

3. "If nobody raises his or her hand, I'm just going to pick someone," said Ms. Davis.

antecedent: _____

4. "I moved that pile of papers to your bedroom," said Kendra's mom. "I was tired of looking at it."

antecedent: _____

5. I'm hoping that either Kevin or Evan will share his notes from yesterday with me.

antecedent: _____

6. At the beginning of this month, my family bought new juice glasses. Three of them are already broken!

antecedent: _____

Directions: Put a check mark next to the sentence or pair of sentences that is grammatically correct.

7. **a** ____ Both Samantha and Lara forgot their umbrellas.

b ____ Both Samantha and Lara forgot her umbrella.

8. **a** ____ Where is that can of black beans we bought yesterday? I can't find them.

b ____ Where is that can of black beans we bought yesterday? I can't find it.

9. **a** ____ Neither Adam nor Anthony answered their phones.

b ____ Neither Adam nor Anthony answered his phone.

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the correct pronouns.

10. There were five boys in the group, each with _____ own idea of what the group should do first.

11. If nobody wants these last two cookies, I'm going to eat _____.

12. One of the girls left _____ phone on the bus. I'm going to give _____ to the driver.

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Puzzling Pronouns

Think about the following sentence:

When my mom takes my little sister to the playground, she is really happy.

Who is happy—your mom or your sister? It's not clear to whom the pronoun *she* refers. Because of this, the sentence is ambiguous, or open to more than one meaning. Here is one way to make the sentence clear:

My little sister is really happy when my mom takes her to the playground.

Directions: Place a check (✓) next to the CLEAR sentence in each group. We did the first one for you.

1. a _____ The Richardsons brought delicious turkey burgers to the picnic—I just love them!
b ☒ I just love the delicious turkey burgers that the Richardsons brought to the picnic.
2. a _____ "I'm getting a new bicycle for Christmas," Lily told Ruby.
b _____ Lily told Ruby that she was getting a new bicycle for Christmas.
3. a _____ The Davis twins told their parents that they were wrong about the location of the soccer game.
b _____ The Davis twins were wrong about the location of the soccer game, so they told their parents.
4. a _____ Justin received the math prize as well as the writing award, but he was very modest about it.
b _____ Justin received the math prize as well as the writing award, but he was very modest about his achievements.
5. a _____ I dropped my notebook as I was taking it out of my backpack.
b _____ As I was taking my notebook out of my backpack, I dropped it.

Directions: Revise the following sentences so that their meanings are clear. We did the first one for you.

6. When Richard saw Joel in the driver's seat, he let out a shout of surprise.

Richard let out a shout of surprise when he saw Joel in the driver's seat.

7. Mai gave her niece a huge candy bar that she kept taking bites of.

8. While Sean and his dad were waiting for the mail carrier, he started whistling loudly.

9. The McDermotts visited the Smiths after they got back from their vacation.
