In earlier lessons we have been exploring ways of writing more effective sentences. In today’s lesson we will look at pronouns, their agreement reference and point of view which are essential for good writing.

Let us begin………………

Lesson 27 – Pronouns (Agreement, Reference Point of View)

Look at the following sentences and see if you locate the mistake in each sentence.

1. Each of my students required four to five chances to pass their driving test.
2. If there are stains on any hotel sheets, they should be removed at once.
3. People go to the neighborhood restaurant because you get low-priced meals there all day.

Explanation

1. Each of my students required four to five chances to pass his driving test. (Each is singular. It requires a sing. pronoun, his to refer to it.)
2. If there are stains on any hotel sheets, the sheets should be removed at once. (which is to be removed-stains or sheets? pronoun they could refer to either one. Replacing they with the sheets makes the meaning of the sentence clear.)
3. People go to the neighborhood restaurant because they can get low priced meals. (People requires a third person pronoun, they. Sentences that begin in the third person should not suddenly shift their point of view to the second person, you.)

In today’s lesson you will learn how to avoid the three most frequent kinds of pronoun mistakes: pronoun agreement, pronoun reference, and pronoun point of view.

I. Pronoun Agreement

Agreement shows the relationship between nouns and pronouns and their verbs and between nouns and their corresponding pronouns. Agreement specifies that a singular noun / pronoun uses a singular verb, a plural noun / pronoun takes a plural verb, a singular pronoun refers to a singular noun, and plural pronoun refers to a plural noun. A pronoun must agree in number with the word it refers to (sometimes called the pronoun’s antecedent. e.g.

(i) The students have spent many hours studying for their examinations. The antecedent of ‘their’ is ‘students.’
(ii) The book Yousaf lent me is missing its cover. (‘Its’, a sing. pronoun, refers to book, a sing. N.)
(i) The students have spent many hours studying for their examinations.

(ii) The book Yousaf lent me is missing its cover.

(iii) If your friends don’t get here soon, they’ll miss the train.

The following is a list of indefinite pronouns which are always singular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>each</th>
<th>anyone</th>
<th>anybody</th>
<th>anything</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>either</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>everybody</td>
<td>everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither</td>
<td>someone</td>
<td>somebody</td>
<td>something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>no one</td>
<td>nobody</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   e.g. i) Each of the wild horses raced for its freedom.
   ii) Neither of my sons ever feels like cleaning his room.
   iii) No one in the class wanted to read his / her paper aloud.
   iv) No students in the class wanted to read their papers aloud.

Practice 1 (A)
For each sentence write the pronoun needed and the word that the pronoun refers to. The first sentence is done for you.

1. Neither of the babies has had (his, their) polio shot yet. (The pronoun needed is his. The word it refers to is neither).

2. Many high schools now require (their, its) students to take a computer course. (The pronoun needed is their. The word it refers to is schools).

3. Each of the girls invited (her, their) mother to the party. (The pronoun needed is her. The word it refers to is each).

4. Nobody can join the club unless (they are, he / she is) invited. (The pronoun/s and verb needed are he / she. The word the pronoun/s and verb needed are he or she. The word the pronoun/s refer to is nobody).

5. Everything in the office has (its, their) own place. The pronoun needed is its. It refers to everything.

Practice 1 B: Choose the correct pronoun(s) from the words given in brackets.

6. Each of the actresses who auditioned believes (she, they) should be chosen for the main role.

7. If anybody is interested in a part-time job at the library, (he / she, they) should let the chief librarian known.
Practice 1 B: Choose the correct pronoun(s) from the words given in brackets.

6. Each of the actresses who auditioned believes (she, they) should be chosen for the main role.
7. If anybody is interested in a part-time job at the library, (he / she, they) should let the chief librarian known.

8. Either medicine is fine, but (it, they) must be taken regularly.
9. Somebody in the ladies’ lounge stole my dark glasses, and I would love to get back at (her, them)
10. Neither of my uncles has ever smoked in (his, their) life.

II. Pronoun Reference
Just as a pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent it is also necessary for effective communication for a pronoun to refer clearly to the word it stands for. If the meaning of a pronoun is uncertain, the sentence will be confusing. This agreement between a noun and its pronoun is related to number, person and gender, and is called, reference. e.g.

(i) Rabia told Nafeesa that she had got an A in her term paper. (who got the A - Rabia or Nafeesa? The word she and her could refer to either one).
(ii) Javeria told Laila she will be unable to keep her job.
(iii) Personnel and management have reached tentative agreement on its contract.
(iv) Each student is encouraged to submit their work on time.
(v) There was no question after the lecture, which was regrettable. (What was regrettable - lecture, lack of questions? Be careful with the use of the pronouns ‘which’ and ‘this’. They must clearly, refer to one thing or situation.

(vi) Both of Basit’s parents are doctors, but it doesn’t interest Basit. (What doesn’t interest Basit? ProN it doesn’t refer to anything in the sentence.)

Notice how communication is enhanced in these sentences given earlier. For the first example you can write

(i) Rabia told Nafeesa, “You got an A on your term paper”. OR
Rabia told Nafeesa, “I got an A on my term paper”.

(ii) Javeria will be unable to keep her job – according to what she told Laila.

(iii) Personnel and management have reached tentative agreement on personnel’s contract.

(iv) Each student is encouraged to submit his or her work on time.

(v) There were no questions after the lecture. Not having questions was regrettable.

(vi) Both of Basit’s parents are doctors, but medicine doesn’t interest Basit.

Practice 2

Choose the correct word / words from those given in the brackets.

1. As Riaz told his father about being arrested,(Riaz, he) began to cry.

2. Students complain that (they, the maintenance staff) don’t keep the library tidy.
**Practice 2**

Choose the correct word / words from those given in the brackets.

1. As Riaz told his father about being arrested, (Riaz, he) began to cry.
2. Students complain that (they, the maintenance staff) don’t keep the library tidy.
3. Mahnoor tore off the wrapping paper from the present and then threw (it, the paper) in the rubbish bin.
4. Many poor people shop at the Sunday bazaar because (they, the vendors) give a 05 percent discount.
5. Many people enjoy hiking and camping, but I’m not interested in (them, those activities).

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### III. Pronoun Point of View

Pronouns that refer to the person who is speaking is called a **first person** e.g. *I, me, our*. A pronoun that refers to someone being spoken to, such as *you*, is a **second person** pronoun. And a pronoun that refers to another person or thing, such as *he, she, it*, is **third person** pronoun.

Here are the personal pronouns in first, second and third person groupings. (see on red slide only)

When you write your pronoun, point of view must stay the same. Do not shift unnecessarily from one point of view to another, as in the following sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(i) *The worst thing about my not writing letters is that you never get any back.* (the writer begins with the first person pronoun *my*, but then shifts to the second person pronoun *you*).

(ii) *Though we like most of our neighbors, there are a few you can’t get along with.* (The writer begins with the fist person pronouns we and our, but then shifts to the second person pronoun you).
(i) The worst thing about my not writing letters is that you never get any back.

(ii) Though we like most of our neighbors, there are a few you can’t get along with.

These sentences can be improved by eliminating the shifts in person:

(i) The worst thing about my not writing letters is that I never get any back.

(ii) Though we like most of our neighbors, there are a few we can’t get along with.

Practice 3

Improve the following sentences by eliminating the shifts in person.

1. What I like best about holidays is that you don’t have to set an alarm.
   - What I like best about holidays is that I don’t have to set an alarm.

2. The laborers have to take a break at 11:00 whether we want to or not.
   - The laborers have to take a break at 11:00 whether they want to or not.

3. Whenever students are under a great deal of stress, we often go into depression.
   - Whenever students are under a great deal of stress, they often go into depression.

4. If you plan to do well on this course, you should plan on attending every lesson.
   - If you plan to do well on this course, you should plan on attending every lesson.

5. When I first began to work as a nurse, I was surprised at how rude some patients were to you.
   - When I first began to work as a nurse, I was surprised at how rude some patients were to me.

Now you shall take a test which is in three parts.

TEST – (A) Rewrite the following sentences after correcting the pronoun mistakes.

1. Neither friend wants to work in (his/their) family business. (neither an indefinite pronoun, is singular. The second pronoun must agree with it in number).

2. If anyone does not want (his or her / their) pudding, I’ll eat it.
TEST – (A) Rewrite the following sentences after correcting the pronoun mistakes.

1. Neither friend wants to work in (his/their) family business.
2. If anyone does not want (his or her / their) pudding, I’ll eat it.
3. When I was stopped for speeding, he said I’d been going beyond the speed limit.
   - When I was stopped for speeding, the police officer said……
4. I won’t go to Abrar ul Haq’s concert tonight because there’s no way you could get a ticket.
   - I won’t go to …… No way I could get a ticket.

TEST B: Each of the following passages contain two pronoun mistakes. Find the mistakes and rewrite the correct version of the passage.

1. Bashir told Yousaf that he needed a new car. Bashir went on to say, “I still like my old Suzuki, but the car spends more time in the workshop than on the road.” Yousaf agreed that anybody who had to pay for so many repairs to their car should buy a new one.
   - (Bashir told Yousaf, “I need a new car”. Yousaf….. Yousaf agreed …… So many repairs to his car should buy a new one.

2. The restaurant down the road isn’t making a profit these days. During an inspection last month, they found rats and cockroaches in the kitchen. The bad publicity caused the restaurant to close down for a week, which was damaging to the restaurants business.
   - The restaurant down the road …….. The health officials found …….. Close down for a week. This closing was damaging

2. The restaurant down the road isn’t making a profit these days. During an inspection last month, they found rats and cockroaches in the kitchen. The bad publicity caused the restaurant to close down for a week, which was damaging to the restaurants business.
3. Each of the sisters is a successful artist in their own field. Amina does oil paintings that she sells at the Grow Eaters’ Gallery. Kamilia makes jewelry which she sells by herself from her home.

4. An angry looking man stood outside the bank, shouting that they had stolen his money. Passersby walked around him quickly because they did not know what he might do.

TEST C: In the following passage each sentence contains one pronoun mistake. Find the mistakes & correct it.

1. When Aunty Mussarrat and Uncle Riaz arrived, we all jumped up from the dinner table and rushed to the door, shouting their greetings. 2. "I’m sorry we’re late,” said uncle Riaz, “but Mussarrat insists on driving at forty miles an hour, no matter how late you are.” 3. “But you were late in coming home from work and also in leaving Islamabad, and it’s all your fault”, Aunty Mussarat answered. 4. “The worst thing for me is living with such a fussy man is you always have to wait for him to finish selecting his wardrobe, washing his car and combing his hair just right,” continued Aunty.

Sentence 1: their greetings - our greetings we all jumped - we is a 1st person pronoun. Their is a shift to the 3rd person point of view.

Sentence 2: how late you are – how late we are

Sentence 3: its – it does not refer to anything in the sentence: and the lateness is all you fault.

Sentence 4: such a fussy man is you always have to wait for him - I always have to wait for him.

Lesson Review

Answer each question by telling in the correct word or words in the blank.

1. Words such as each, everyone, and something are singular pronouns.

2. Words such I, you, and they are personal pronouns.

3. A second person pronoun is one that refers to the person being spoken to.

4. True or False? A pronoun may be singular even if its antecedent is plural. (F)

5. True or False? A writer should not needlessly change from the first person to the second person. (T)
Lesson Review

Answer each question by telling in the correct word or words in the blank.

1. Words such as each, everyone, and something are ______ pronouns.

2. Words such I, you, and they are ______ pronouns.

3. A ______ person pronoun is one that refers to the person being spoken to.

4. True or False? A pronoun may be singular even if its antecedent is plural. ( ___ )

5. True or False? A writer should not needlessly change from the first person to the second person. ( ___ )

RECAP:

In today’s lesson you looked at some more sentence errors and how to improve your written expression by focusing on – the pronouns, their agreement and the point of view. All good writers keep in mind these aspects of language and avoid these errors, and you should also try to avoid making such errors.

Allah Hafiz