



PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

THE SKILL

What word do you see within the word *pronoun*? That's right—*noun*! So of course, the job of a pronoun is to refer back to an existing noun (*someone* or *something*). We call this the **antecedent**. Just as nouns can be singular or plural, so can pronouns. It's only common sense, then, that pronouns should be the same in **number** (as well as the same in **gender**) as the nouns they refer to.

WHAT THESE QUESTIONS LOOK LIKE

A citizen can use **(5) their** right to vote to change controversial laws.

5. A. NO CHANGE
 B. its
 C. his
 D. his or her

In this sentence, the right to vote belongs to a singular person of an unknown gender, making **D** the correct answer.

STRATEGIES TO WIN

These steps are actually quite similar to those outlining subject-verb agreement:

1. Find the **pronoun**.
2. Find your **antecedent** (Ask yourself this: to whom or what does this pronoun refer? You may need to look around a bit).
3. Determine if your antecedent is:
 - a. **Singular or plural**
 - b. **Masculine or feminine** (or neither)
 - c. **Possessive or not possessive**
4. If the pronoun and antecedent agree, select **NO CHANGE**. If not, choose the option that agrees in both gender and number (as well as possessive/not possessive).

Watch Out! Often times, ACT will underline the pronoun, but not its antecedent. Alone, the pronoun may sound okay, but it does not agree with its antecedent. Another way the test tries to throw you off is to separate the pronoun from the antecedent—you may have to look far away from the pronoun to the noun to which it refers.

PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT PRACTICE

Profanity Prohibited in Public

The use of profanity is certainly frowned upon in schools and in the presence of adults. One Massachusetts town, though, became so offended by the use of profanity in public that **(1) they** decided to make it against the law.

Actually, an ordinance prohibiting the use of curse words had been on the books since 1968 in Middlebury, Massachusetts, but **(2) it** was never enforced. By June of 2012, though, the town's police chief convinced the city council to impose a fine to try to curb loud, profanity-laden conversations held by teenagers in the town's public parks and downtown area.

Since then, residents have expressed mixed reactions. Many adults and small business owners are relieved, hoping that **(3) it** will get through to teenagers and help them to watch their language. Others, however, feel that the law will be ineffective. Many teens in particular feel that **(4) their** age group is being unfairly targeted.

Of course, there is also the issue of constitutionality. Some lawyers anticipate that the law will be questioned on the basis of the First Amendment, which guarantees the right of free speech, and **(5) it is expected of the ordinance** to eventually be reversed.

1. A. NO CHANGE
 B. it
 C. them
 D. he

2. F. NO CHANGE
 G. they
 H. the profanity
 J. OMIT the underlined portion

3. A. NO CHANGE
 B. jail time
 C. the fine
 D. this

4. F. NO CHANGE
 G. its
 H. they
 J. they're

5. A. NO CHANGE
 B. he expects the ordinance
 C. we expect the ordinance
 D. they expect the ordinance