

Pronouns: general rules

Since a personal pronoun is used instead of a noun, it must be of the same number, gender and person as the noun for which it stands.

Those beggars are idle. They refuse to work for their living. (Here the pronoun they is of the same number and person as the noun beggars.)

Alice is a beautiful girl. She is also very kind.

When a pronoun stands for a collective noun, it must be in the singular number if the collective noun is thought of a whole.

The fleet has reached its destination.

The jury will give its verdict in a few hours.

If the reference is to the individual members of the group, a pronoun standing for a collective noun must be plural in number.

The jury are still debating the issue and will announce their individual opinions in a few hours. When two singular nouns joined by and are preceded by each or every, the pronoun must be singular in number.

Every man and every boy should be ready to defend his country.

When two singular nouns are joined by or, either...or or neither...nor, the pronoun should be singular in number.

Neither Peter nor John has brought his book. (NOT Neither Peter nor John have brought their books.)

Good manners require that we should say:

'You and I' not 'I and you'

'You and he' not 'he and you'

'He and I' not 'I and he'