

What Are Pronouns?

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun, a group of words acting as a noun, or another pronoun. The noun (group of words or other pronoun) the pronoun refers to is called the **antecedent**. Pronoun errors occur when the pronoun does not “agree” with the noun it replaced. The pronoun should agree in several ways—number (singular or plural), gender (male, female, or none), and person (first, second, or third).

Like nouns, pronouns are divided into several categories (personal, possessive, reflexive, intensive, demonstrative, interrogative, relative, reciprocal, and indefinite), but the difference is that each category has slightly different rules.

In the following examples pronouns are marked in **red** and antecedents are marked in **blue**.

Examples:

←
When **Santa Clause** came down the chimney to leave gifts, **he** was shocked to learn that the fireplace was lit! (personal)

←
The **vampire** had difficulty viewing **his** own reflection in the mirror. (possessive)

←
Mary, herself, had a little lamb. (intensive)

←
Mary bought **herself** a little lamb. (reflexive)

← (references an implied antecedent) →
Are you going to eat **these**? (demonstrative)

Where did you say you were going? (interrogative)

←
The first **astronauts who** landed on the moon must have been very brave. (relative)
subordinate clause

←
After the arrest, the **prisoners** were blaming **each other** for being caught. (reciprocal)

←
Don't you think you have spent **enough** money on Prom? (indefinite)

FROM *THE WIZARD OF OZ* BY L. FRANK BAUM



Dorothy and Toto 1939—
motionpictureimaging.com

"**We** must certainly get to the Emerald City if **we** can," the Scarecrow continued, and **he** pushed so hard on **his** long pole that **it** stuck fast in the mud at the bottom of the river. Then, before **he** could pull **it** out again--or let go--the raft was swept away, and the poor Scarecrow left clinging to the pole in the middle of the river.

"Good-bye!" **he** called after **them**, and **they** were very sorry to leave **him**. Indeed, the Tin Woodman began to cry, but fortunately remembered that **he** might rust, and so dried **his** tears on Dorothy's apron.