

# Choices: Examining Agreement

The following activities challenge you to find a connection between agreement and the world around you. Do the activity below that suits your personality best, and then share your discoveries with your class. Have fun!

## GAME

### Don't You Dare?

Here is a game for a group of seven or eight. Get that old beanbag out. If you don't have a beanbag, use a ruler or an eraser. Have the group stand in a circle. You begin the game by saying either *Don't* or *Doesn't* as you pass the beanbag to the person next to you. Let's call her Carla. Carla hands the beanbag to the next person, who quickly hands it to the next, and so on. As the beanbag goes around the circle, Carla must add a subject to *Don't* or *Doesn't* and complete the question. For instance, she might say, "Don't they go to our school?" The trick is that Carla must complete the question before the beanbag comes back round to her. If she does, she wins a point, calls either *Don't* or *Doesn't*, and hands the beanbag to the next person.

## WRITING

### Better Business Bureau

Get a telephone book and make a list of businesses and organizations that use plural nouns in their names. Choose organizations that you know well, such as the theaters you frequent, the stores you like, and clubs you enjoy. For each business, write a sentence. If you're musical, you could turn your sentences into a hometown rap. Just make sure that you position these business and organization names as subjects that agree with present tense verbs. Use some names as antecedents to pronouns, too. Read or perform your sentences for the class.

## REFLECTION

### All for Nothing

What's the use of identifying usage errors if you don't learn from them? It's all for nothing! Create a form that you and your classmates can use to keep track of usage errors. Include columns for the error, the correction, and classification of the error. Pass out copies to all your classmates.

## STUDY AID

### Jingle Jangle

Ask your classmates or your teacher which agreement error seems to be the most frequent. Then, write a mnemonic device to help everyone remember the rule easily. You could write a rhyme, a rap, or some other memory aid. Write a memo that includes your study aid, and pass out copies to the class.

## DRAMA

### One, Not Two

Compound subjects joined by *nor* can be confusing. After all, compound subjects name two or more nouns or pronouns. These subjects seem plural, but they aren't always plural. Help your classmates see why singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* require a singular verb. Create six to eight examples of this type of sentence, and ask permission to act them out for the class. You'll need at least three people: a reader and two performers.

## GEOGRAPHY

### The Philippines

Lots of countries, cities, and towns have names that sound plural. The Philippines is one example. Does it seem strange to read *The Philippines is* instead of *The Philippines are*? Help your classmates get used to hearing and seeing such names as singular nouns that take singular verbs and pronouns. Get a world or national map. Mark the map with a dozen plural place names. Then, write a sentence for each place name. In your sentence, use a singular pronoun to refer to the place name. For instance, you could write *The Philippines relies on fishing for its food supply*. Ask to present your map to the class, reading each of your sentences as you point to the appropriate place.

# Subject-Verb Agreement A

**Number** is the form a word takes to indicate whether the word is singular or plural.

- 8a.** When a word refers to one person, place, thing, or idea, it is **singular** in number. When a word refers to more than one person, place, thing, or idea, it is **plural** in number.

**SINGULAR** lesson, box, child, him, each

**PLURAL** lessons, boxes, children, them, many

**EXERCISE A** Above each of the following words, write *S* for *singular* or *P* for *plural*.

- Examples** 1. <sup>S</sup>woman  
2. <sup>P</sup>women

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. cases    | 11. feet    |
| 2. us       | 12. she     |
| 3. clock    | 13. few     |
| 4. book     | 14. spoons  |
| 5. pencil   | 15. pin     |
| 6. stereos  | 16. lemon   |
| 7. them     | 17. plate   |
| 8. wish     | 18. tribes  |
| 9. mice     | 19. shelves |
| 10. knuckle | 20. yam     |

**EXERCISE B** On the lines provided, write the plural form of each of the following words.

**Example** 1. chicken chickens

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 21. person _____   | 26. hawk _____      |
| 22. dentist _____  | 27. actor _____     |
| 23. cup _____      | 28. cow _____       |
| 24. audience _____ | 29. scientist _____ |
| 25. reporter _____ | 30. potato _____    |

# Subject-Verb Agreement B

**8b.** A verb should agree in number with its subject.

- (1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.  
(2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

When a sentence contains a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the verb phrase agrees with the subject.

**EXAMPLES** Our favorite **sport is** soccer. [The singular verb *is* agrees with the singular subject *sport*.]

**We have been playing** soccer in the park. [The plural helping verb *have* agrees with the plural subject *We*.]

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** Soccer (is, are) the world's most popular team sport.

1. Our cat (*like*, *likes*) to watch television with us, especially the nature shows.
2. All the students (*enjoy*, *enjoys*) the reading assignment every week.
3. Before he became a lawyer, my uncle Nacio (*was*, *were*) a high-wire performer in the circus.
4. This music (*has*, *have*) elements of harmony that are very complex.
5. (*Is*, *Are*) Rafael usually first in line for every new movie in town?
6. As the final plot twist is revealed, the reader (*start*, *starts*) to understand why the butler left the French doors open.
7. My mother (*prefer*, *prefers*) a good book to a good movie.
8. Many passersby (*are*, *is*) curious about the mysterious building being constructed downtown.
9. Before they leave for vacation, the women (*ask*, *asks*) their neighbors to look after their house.
10. The grass (*is*, *are*) always greener after a good rain.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, underline the helping verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** Jacob (has, *have*) been exploring a salt marsh.

11. Over the past year, Jonelle (*has*, *have*) been collecting articles about Olympic gymnasts.
12. I read that the English actor Ralph Fiennes (*is*, *are*) appearing in *Hamlet* this season in London.
13. (*Do*, *Does*) she know yet about the letter from her brother?
14. They (*has*, *have*) been thinking about adopting a dog for some time now.
15. Certainly Mr. Iwaye (*do*, *does*) understand the importance of meeting the deadline.

# Subject-Verb Agreement C

**8c.** The number of a subject is not changed by a phrase or clause following the subject.

**EXAMPLES** This **collection** of myths and legends **is** fascinating.  
The **flowers** that I planted in the front yard **are** in need of water.

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** The book in which I found these facts and figures (belongs, belong) to Ms. Najera.

1. The last people off the ship (carry, carries) their own luggage.
2. This anthology of short stories (include, includes) at least one story by Charles Baxter.
3. Songs about love often (make, makes) me cry.
4. Jim's brother, who is an art director for television sitcoms in Hollywood, (is, are) a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
5. The demolition of a skyscraper always (draw, draws) a crowd.
6. At the end of the story, the king of the birds (declare, declares), "I grant the eagle's request!"
7. The solution to all of our problems (is, are) to start the project over again from scratch.
8. The potatoes from the garden (was, were) peeled before they were put into the pot.
9. Two types of salad (was, were) served first.
10. The sound of the passing ships (echo, echoes) through the fog.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, circle the subject of the verb in parentheses. Then, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** My favorite (book) of short stories (is, are) *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* by Edgar Allan Poe.

11. The students in my karate class (watch, watches) carefully whenever the instructor demonstrates a move.
12. The jar of lima beans (was, were) stored in the coolest section of the cellar.
13. The birthday cards that I received this year (is, are) mostly from out of town.
14. The two men, who both work the third shift at the police department, (sleep, sleeps) during the day.
15. The judges on the panel (decide, decides) which skaters will continue to the semifinals.

# Subject-Verb Agreement D

**USAGE**

- 8d.** The following indefinite pronouns are singular: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

**EXAMPLE** **Everyone is** responsible for bringing his or her own lunch.

- 8e.** The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

**EXAMPLE** **Both** of the girls **excel** at basketball.

- 8f.** The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

Often, the object in a prepositional phrase that follows the pronoun indicates whether the pronoun is singular or plural. Usually, if the object of the preposition is singular, the pronoun is singular. If the object is plural, the pronoun is plural.

**EXAMPLES** **Some** of the carrots **have** been sliced. [*Some* refers to the plural object *carrots*.]  
**Some** of the salad **is** in the refrigerator. [*Some* refers to the singular object *salad*.]

**EXERCISE** Circle the indefinite pronoun in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** Most of the cups (*was, were*) unbroken after the earthquake.

1. Something about the candidate's answers (*has, have*) been bothering me ever since the debate.
2. Both of the dogs (*has, have*) already been treated for heartworm.
3. All of the stuff in the attic (*need, needs*) to be dusted before the yard sale.
4. Neither of the movies (*is, are*) very good.
5. (*Have, Has*) not several of these dogs already won awards?
6. Everybody who is registered for the class (*read, reads*) the same books.
7. No one in the play (*was, were*) prepared for the overwhelming response of the audience on opening night.
8. (*Is, Are*) any of the dough ready to be baked?
9. The director is pleased that more of the singers (*have, has*) memorized the score for this rehearsal than for the last rehearsal.
10. Somebody among the reporters covering the trial (*is, are*) getting inside information from the district attorney.

## Subject-Verb Agreement E

- 8d.** The following indefinite pronouns are singular: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

**EXAMPLE** **Each** of these lakes **has** good fishing and boating.

- 8e.** The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

**EXAMPLE** **Few** of the trails **are** rocky.

- 8f.** The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

Often, the object in a prepositional phrase that follows the pronoun indicates whether the pronoun is singular or plural. Usually, if the object of the preposition is singular, the pronoun is singular. If the object is plural, the pronoun is plural.

**EXAMPLES** **Most** of the campground **is occupied**. [*Most* refers to the singular object *campground*.]

**Most** of the campsites **are occupied**. [*Most* refers to the plural object *campsites*.]

**EXERCISE** Circle the indefinite pronoun in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** Many of the ocean's creatures (*looks, look*) strange to us.

1. Few of the world's sharks (*grows, grow*) to be sixty feet long.
2. One of the most interesting sharks (*is, are*) the whale shark.
3. Each of a whale shark's eggs (*is, are*) quite large.
4. "(*Has, Have*) anyone here ever seen a whale shark's egg?" asked the tour guide.
5. None of the sharks (*swims, swim*) toward the visitors.
6. Some of the other sea creatures (*is, are*) frightening, too.
7. Many of the visitors (*screams, scream*).
8. Few of us (*has, have*) seen a giant jellyfish before.
9. Several of the park's divers (*follows, follow*) a manta ray.
10. Everyone in our class (*seems, seem*) to be having a good time at the ocean park.

# Subject-Verb Agreement F

**8g.** Subjects joined by *and* usually take a plural verb.

A compound subject that names only one person or thing takes a singular verb.

**EXAMPLES** **Franco** and **I** **look** for a book about the life of George Washington Carver.  
One respected **professor** and **researcher** at Tuskegee Institute **was** George Washington Carver.

**8h.** Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb. Plural subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a plural verb.

**EXAMPLES** Neither **poverty** nor any other **hardship** **was** too great an obstacle for Carver.  
Neither difficult **times** nor **disappointments** **were** too great an obstacle for Carver.

**8i.** When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

**EXAMPLE** At first, neither the local **farmers** nor Carver's closest **friend** **was** interested in his ideas.

**EXERCISE** Circle the subjects of the verb in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** Plants, flowers and soil (*was*, were) interesting to Carver.

1. Plants and flowers (*is*, *are*) featured on the cover of this book about Carver's life.
2. The author and illustrator of the book (*is*, *are*) the same person.
3. According to the book, grief and sorrow (*was*, *were*) part of Carver's early life.
4. Neither his mother nor his father (*was*, *were*) alive to raise Carver.
5. At the time, slaveholding and slave trading (*was*, *were*) widespread.
6. Neither Carver nor many other African Americans (*was*, *were*) able to find a college that would enroll them.
7. Neither the large universities nor the local college (*was*, *were*) accepting applications from African Americans.
8. Just laws and the strict enforcement of them (*was*, *were*) needed.
9. Also described in the book (*is*, *are*) Carver's experiments and discoveries.
10. An innovative educator and scientist (*was*, *were*) George Washington Carver.



# Subject-Verb Agreement G

**8j.** When the subject follows the verb, find the subject and make sure the verb agrees with it.

**EXAMPLES** Here **is** the **list** of topics from which you may choose.  
When **are** these **books** due back to the library?

**EXERCISE A** For each of the following sentences, underline the word or word group in parentheses that correctly completes the sentence.

**Example 1.** When (*do, does*) the teacher want us to finish the assignment?

1. Why (*is, are*) your parents going to Beijing?
2. Here (*is, are*) the magazines you were looking for.
3. (*Has, Have*) the students returned from their field trip yet?
4. (*There is, There are*) a snail crawling across the aquarium.
5. Where (*is, are*) the cat?
6. (*Do, Does*) all of your brothers and sisters speak Vietnamese?
7. When (*was, were*) the latest episodes of the program scheduled to begin?
8. There (*is, are*) many reasons you should read that book.
9. How (*do, does*) those new shoes feel?
10. Brittany, here (*is, are*) the books on astronomy you ordered.

**EXERCISE B** Circle the subject or subjects of the verb in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the word or word group in parentheses that correctly completes the sentence.

**Example 1.** (*Has, Have*) anyone in your family ever learned to water-ski?

11. (*Are, Is*) your little brother a finalist in the state gymnastics tournament?
12. (*There's, There are*) over forty species of birds that pass through my backyard.
13. How (*do, does*) bees make honey?
14. Here (*lie, lies*) the ruins of the colony.
15. When (*is, are*) your cousins from Guatemala coming to visit?
16. (*Do, Does*) anyone here have change for a twenty-dollar bill?
17. There (*was, were*) no excuses for what Dudley had done.
18. What (*do, does*) the Andersons want to know about the school system?
19. (*Has, Have*) someone told you the rules of our game?
20. Here (*is, are*) Amy and her sisters!



# Subject-Verb Agreement H

**8k.** The contractions *don't* and *doesn't* should agree with their subjects.

**EXAMPLES** These **shoes don't** fit me very well.

**Doesn't she** go to your school?

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the word in parentheses that correctly completes the sentence.

**Example 1.** This old recording (*don't*, *doesn't*) sound like me.

1. Minneapolis and Toronto (*don't*, *doesn't*) have the climate for palm trees.
2. They (*don't*, *doesn't*) plan to attend the concert tonight.
3. (*Don't*, *Doesn't*) her brothers have a copy of the book?
4. They (*don't*, *doesn't*) plan to go to the reunion.
5. Macaroni and cheese (*don't*, *doesn't*) sound very good to me when I'm sick.
6. Only a few of the choir (*don't*, *doesn't*) know the words to the song.
7. (*Don't*, *Doesn't*) she attend ballet class with your brother?
8. It (*don't*, *doesn't*) matter how you fix the bicycle as long as you do it by Friday.
9. Anyone who thinks cricket is easy (*don't*, *doesn't*) understand the game.
10. (*Don't*, *Doesn't*) everyone wonder about where the stars come from?

**EXERCISE B** Complete each of the following sentences by inserting the correct contraction, *doesn't* or *don't*, on the line provided.

**Example 1.** She *doesn't* think she can finish the project on time.

11. Mr. Maduzia \_\_\_\_\_ know anyone else on the softball team.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ someone have the answer to my question?
13. Dr. Anna Kim \_\_\_\_\_ work at this clinic any longer.
14. Paolo \_\_\_\_\_ believe in UFOs, but he does believe in ghosts.
15. These ficus plants \_\_\_\_\_ look very healthy to me.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ you think we should begin the test now?
17. The video box \_\_\_\_\_ say who directed the film.
18. He \_\_\_\_\_ think you should go, does he?
19. The opera \_\_\_\_\_ seem as long in performance as it did in rehearsal.
20. Anyone who \_\_\_\_\_ own a dog or a cat wouldn't understand how I feel.

# Subject-Verb Agreement I

- 81.** A collective noun may be either singular or plural, depending on its meaning in a sentence.

The singular form of a *collective noun* names a group of persons, animals, or things. It takes a singular verb when it refers to the group as a unit. It takes a plural verb when it refers to the individual parts or members of the group.

**EXAMPLES** The **team has been practicing** since March. [The team practices as a unit.]  
The **team have been discussing** their strategies with one another. [Individual members discuss with one another.]

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** The orchestra (is, are) rehearsing this afternoon at three o'clock.

1. Before each game, the team (*practice*, *practices*) their kicks.
2. As Napoleon once said, an army (*travel*, *travels*) on its stomach.
3. The committee generally (*decide*, *decides*) on its course of action pretty quickly.
4. After the rain, the entire herd (*graze*, *grazes*) peacefully along the hillside.
5. The Activist Alliance (*hold*, *holds*) its annual meeting this week in Fargo.
6. As the comedian leaves the stage, the audience (*applaud*, *applauds*) wildly.
7. The flock (*lift*, *lifts*) into the air a few birds at a time.
8. The evening before the big battle, the army (*clean*, *cleans*) their weapons.
9. Our family (*has*, *have*) never been able to agree on our destination for summer vacation.
10. The team (*are*, *is*) receiving awards for their individual achievements.

**EXERCISE B** On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write the correct present tense form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** The crowd surges toward the stage. (*surge*)

11. The team \_\_\_\_\_ among themselves over who gets to go first. (*bicker*)
12. The committee \_\_\_\_\_ gone their separate ways for lunch. (*have*)
13. Every Saturday, the troop \_\_\_\_\_ individual projects to their parents. (*present*)
14. The public \_\_\_\_\_ each new CD from Bryn Terfel with even greater acclaim than the one before. (*greet*)
15. The posse \_\_\_\_\_ which among them would bring the prisoner back to town. (*discuss*)

# Subject-Verb Agreement J

- 8m.** An expression of an amount (a measurement, a percentage, or a fraction, for example) may be singular or plural, depending on how it is used.

**EXAMPLES** **Ten dollars was** my weekly allowance when I was twelve years old.  
**Ten dollars** with consecutive serial numbers **were lying** on the counter.

- 8n.** Some nouns that are plural in form take singular verbs.

**EXAMPLE** **Is mumps** a contagious disease?

Some nouns that are plural in form and that name singular objects take plural verbs.

**EXAMPLE** Where **are** the **scissors**?

**EXERCISE A** In the following sentences, underline the verb form in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** Twenty percent of the class (is, are) absent today.

1. Fifteen dollars (*was*, *were*) a fair price for that teapot.
2. Sixty yards of fabric (*is*, *are*) necessary to make the banners for the homecoming parade.
3. Eight percent of the microchips (*was*, *were*) defective.
4. Twelve miles (*seem*, *seems*) like a long distance if you're walking.
5. About half of the members of the club (*was*, *were*) aware of the emergency.
6. The three weeks before Christmas (*feel*, *feels*) like forever.
7. One quarter of the flour (*is*, *are*) reserved for breading the cutlets.
8. Three casseroles (*was*, *were*) sitting in a row on the table.
9. Three fourths of the book club's members (*has*, *have*) not read the book yet.
10. Four gallons of gasoline (*is*, *are*) enough to get us to Grand Rapids and back.

**EXERCISE B** In the following sentences, underline the verb form in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** The news today from Kosovo (is, are) surprisingly good.

11. The Olympics (*was*, *were*) in Munich, Germany, that year.
12. Physics (*is*, *are*) my first class of the day.
13. (*Is*, *Are*) civics the study of the duties and rights of citizenship?
14. As she tips her head forward, Charlene's eyeglasses (*slip*, *slips*) down her nose.
15. A summons (*was*, *were*) issued for the witness to appear in court the next day.

# Subject-Verb Agreement K

- 8o.** Even when plural in form, the title of a creative work (such as a book, song, movie, or painting) or the name of a country, city, or organization generally takes a singular verb.

**EXAMPLES** “The Fox and the Grapes” is a fable by Aesop.

The Cayman Islands is a beautiful vacation spot.

- 8p.** A verb agrees with its subject but not necessarily with a predicate nominative.

**EXAMPLES** Oranges are a good source of vitamin C. [The verb *are* agrees with the plural subject *Oranges*, not with the singular predicate nominative *source*.]

A good source of vitamin C is oranges. [The verb *is* agrees with the singular subject *source*, not with the plural predicate nominative *oranges*.]

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb form in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** *The Confessions of St. Augustine* still (has, have) relevance for a modern reader.

- The Birds* (is, are) one of the scariest novellas I’ve ever read.
- He is from the Seychelles, which (is, are) a small island nation in the Indian Ocean.
- Quaker Ladies*, by Andrew Wyeth, (is, are) a painting that appears in my literature textbook.
- (Is, Are) *The Railway Children* your favorite book?
- Big Rapids (seem, seems) to be a nice place to grow up.
- What an unsettling story (is, are) “The Willows,” by Algernon Blackwood!
- The Lusiads* (is, are) an epic poem about the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama.
- This year, the Friends of American Writers (award, awards) its literature prize to *The Wild Colonial Boy*.
- The Bells of St. Mary’s* (star, stars) Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman.
- “The Bells,” by Anne Sexton, (feel, feels) like a cry from the heart.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb form in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** The secret ingredient in my mother’s spaghetti sauce (is, are) four cloves of garlic.

- Potatoes (is, are) the chief crop of my grandfather’s farm in Idaho.
- Weekday afternoons (is, are) the best time to reach Julia at work.
- A good present for Tara (is, are) stereo headphones.
- The most famous product of Detroit, Michigan, (is, are) automobiles.
- (Is, Are) books an appropriate gift for a six-month-old child?

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement A

A pronoun usually refers to a noun or another pronoun called its *antecedent*.

**8q.** A pronoun should agree in number and gender with its antecedent.

**EXAMPLES** Alicia left **her** book bag on the school bus.  
Many people like the **movie** because of **its** special effects.  
The **musicians** are practicing for **their** spring concert.  
Not every **student** has returned **his or her** permission slip for the field trip.

**EXERCISE** On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with the antecedent. Then, circle each antecedent.

**Example 1.** (Paul) loaned Nell \_\_\_\_\_ *his* jacket.

- Mary Ellen took \_\_\_\_\_ dog for a walk after dinner.
- One of the men bent to pick up \_\_\_\_\_ tools.
- Somebody left \_\_\_\_\_ books on the lawn last night.
- Sean said that \_\_\_\_\_ was too tired to come with us to the movies.
- Out of sheer boredom, the cat chased \_\_\_\_\_ own tail.
- Stanley went up to \_\_\_\_\_ room to do the homework assignment.
- Miranda hung the diploma on the wall of \_\_\_\_\_ bedroom.
- Each of the girls on the soccer team received \_\_\_\_\_ own jersey yesterday.
- As the sun set, the mountain cast \_\_\_\_\_ shadow across the desert.
- Pick up the frying pan and bring \_\_\_\_\_ to me, please.
- We stayed awake to watch the film until \_\_\_\_\_ was over.
- If your sister gets here after I leave, tell \_\_\_\_\_ I left a casserole in the fridge.
- Neither of the boys remembered where \_\_\_\_\_ baseball glove was.
- That afternoon Uncle Oliver told us stories about \_\_\_\_\_ experiences in Vietnam.
- Either of the men is willing to tell you what \_\_\_\_\_ saw at the accident scene.
- Emily Dickinson often gave \_\_\_\_\_ poems away as gifts to neighbors.
- Everybody at the office put flowers in \_\_\_\_\_ cubicle.
- The author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* changed \_\_\_\_\_ name from Samuel Clemens to Mark Twain.
- Each of the nuns lifted \_\_\_\_\_ hand to make the sign of the cross.
- Someone hung \_\_\_\_\_ wet towel over the shower curtain.

## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement B

**8r.** Use a singular pronoun to refer to two or more singular antecedents joined by *or* or *nor*.

**EXAMPLE** Neither **Ramona nor Gloria** could find **her** library card.

**8s.** Use a plural pronoun to refer to two or more antecedents joined by *and*.

**EXAMPLE** **Vincent and Jules** have learned all of **their** lines in the play.

**EXERCISE A** On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with the antecedent or antecedents. Then, circle each antecedent.

**Example 1.** Every Sunday Maggie and Roger watched their favorite television show.

1. When we're playing tennis, my brother and I never let the other players intimidate \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Either Jason or Raul will bring \_\_\_\_\_ tool kit to the bicycle race.
3. Brenda and Caitlin told us that \_\_\_\_\_ didn't plan to come to the party.
4. If either Brittany or Celine wants to be a successful writer, \_\_\_\_\_ will need to work hard.
5. Leora and Annette pooled \_\_\_\_\_ resources to buy a birthday present for Jim.
6. Please ask Glendon and Maria if \_\_\_\_\_ science fair project is ready yet.
7. Did Lauryn or Marian say if \_\_\_\_\_ was going to the mock trial?
8. Karen and I discussed \_\_\_\_\_ difference of opinion quite calmly.
9. Frank and Tina would like the class to help \_\_\_\_\_ set up their display.
10. Let Kathryn and Michael know in advance if \_\_\_\_\_ should bring a dish to the party.

**EXERCISE B** Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Cross out the error, and write the correct pronoun above it. Then, circle each antecedent.

**Example 1.** Either Denzel or Malcolm will bring <sup>his</sup>~~their~~ soccer ball to the game.

11. Julio and Spike have brought all of his CDs to the dance.
12. Neither Faith nor Deanna knew where their bicycle was.
13. Is Melissa or Martina sure they won't join us?
14. Let's ask Antonia and Belle if she read the article about comets.
15. Does Dutch or Pike have their notebook with him?

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement C

**8t.** Some indefinite pronouns are plural, some are singular, and some may be either.

(1) Use a singular pronoun to refer to *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

**EXAMPLES** **Each** of the boys likes **his** new uniform.  
Has **everybody** in the club paid **his or her** dues?

(2) The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

**EXAMPLE** **Few** of the explorers became lost on **their** way out of the cave.

(3) The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

**EXAMPLES** **Most** of the forest has already been cut down, hasn't **it**? [*Most* refers to the singular noun *forest*.]  
**Most** of the trees have already been cut down, haven't **they**? [*Most* refers to the plural noun *trees*.]

**EXERCISE** Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Draw a line through each incorrect pronoun, and write the correct form above it. Then, circle the antecedent.

**Example 1.** Each of the cats has <sup>its</sup>~~their~~ own special hiding place.

1. Some of the CDs have lost its jewel cases.
2. Few of the women's soccer team enjoyed her stay in Helsinki.
3. Either of the brothers is willing to bring their baseball glove to the game.
4. Hasn't anybody announced their intentions yet?
5. Many of the reporters do his or her own research.
6. All of the rosebushes in the garden have thorns on it.
7. Everyone in the class is aware of their responsibility to bring a note from home.
8. Someone on the swimming team left their goggles by the side of the pool.
9. Several of the boys joined the military after he graduated from high school.
10. Some of the people in the audience got the joke, and it laughed heartily.



## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement D

**8t.** Some indefinite pronouns are plural, some are singular, and some may be either.

(1) Use a singular pronoun to refer to *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something*.

**EXAMPLES** Has **anyone** lost **his or her** keys?

**Each** of the recipes calls for wheat as **its** main ingredient.

(2) The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several*.

**EXAMPLE** **Several** of the teachers ordered **their** textbooks early.

(3) The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

**EXAMPLES** **All** of the money retained **its** value. [*All* refers to the singular noun *money*.]

**All** of the vases retained **their** value. [*All* refers to the plural noun *vases*.]

**EXERCISE** On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with its antecedent. Then, circle the antecedent.

**Example 1.** Several of the houses lost their roofs during the storm.

- Each of my sisters has \_\_\_\_\_ own pogo stick.
- None of the employees should reveal \_\_\_\_\_ password to anyone.
- Everything the teacher said made sense the moment he said \_\_\_\_\_.
- Both of the astronomical calendars have the same nebula on \_\_\_\_\_ covers.
- Several of the police officers spent \_\_\_\_\_ holidays volunteering at the new community center.
- If you have anything to say during the debate, please say \_\_\_\_\_ as succinctly as possible.
- Neither of my grandmothers has ever revealed \_\_\_\_\_ secret for making jambalaya.
- More of the palm trees have been planted this year because \_\_\_\_\_ look so striking along the beach.
- One of the male interns put \_\_\_\_\_ clipboard down to pick up the baby.
- Most of the radio program was written by Marta, but a few minutes of \_\_\_\_\_ were written by Tish.

## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement E

- 8u.** Either a singular or a plural pronoun may be used to refer to a collective noun, depending on the meaning of the sentence.

A collective noun is singular when it refers to the group as a unit and plural when it refers to the individual parts or members of the group.

**SINGULAR** The **band** made **its** debut in November 1999.

**PLURAL** The **band** happily signed autographs for **their** fans.

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, circle the antecedent for the pronouns in parentheses. Then, underline the pronoun that agrees with the antecedent.

**Example 1.** After hearing all the evidence, the jury made its decision quickly.

1. The thundering herd left a wide swath of flattened grass in *(its, their)* wake.
2. As the team entered the lobby, the fans began to ask for *(its, their)* autographs.
3. After debating all of *(its, their)* options, the commission issued its report.
4. The readership of the newspaper were not shy about making *(its, their)* opinions known.
5. The jury could not agree among *(itself, themselves)* what to order for lunch.
6. During the intermission, the ensemble tuned *(its, their)* instruments.
7. The majority of the class took *(its, their)* work home last night.
8. The Fantasy Society voted *The Lord of the Rings* *(its, their)* choice for Book of the Century.
9. The cast of the play took *(its, their)* curtain calls one at a time.
10. The crowd voted with *(its, their)* feet and left the debate early.

**EXERCISE B** On the line provided in each of the following sentences, write a pronoun that agrees with its antecedent. Then, circle the antecedent.

**Example 1.** The class agreed to hold its annual party next month.

11. The troupe of actors looked good in \_\_\_\_\_ costumes.
12. The entire staff lined up in the parking lot to have \_\_\_\_\_ picture taken.
13. The committee cannot even agree among \_\_\_\_\_.
14. After a fierce battle, the platoon took \_\_\_\_\_ position at the top of the ridge.
15. After winning, the team posed for photographs with \_\_\_\_\_ ecstatic fans.

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement F

- 8v.** An expression of an amount may take a singular or plural pronoun, depending on how the expression is used.

**SINGULAR** I paid **twenty dollars** for these skates. I thought **it** was a reasonable price.

**PLURAL** I have **twenty dollars**, but one of **them** has been torn in half.

- 8w.** Some nouns that are plural in form take singular pronouns.

**SINGULAR** I have good **news**. Would you like to hear **it**?

**PLURAL** Where are the **scissors**? Oh, here **they** are.

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, circle the antecedent for the pronouns in parentheses. Then, underline the pronoun in parentheses that agrees with the antecedent.

**Example 1.** Jerrold enjoyed studying genetics because (it, they) combined biology and chemistry.

- If I make fifty dollars from the carwash this weekend, I can use (*it*, *them*) to put a down payment on a bicycle.
- After Luther oiled the shears, (*it*, *they*) were ready to use again.
- Michiko poured the molasses and watched (*it*, *them*) cover the bottom of the pan.
- Now that you've heard the news, do you think (*it*, *they*) will affect how you vote?
- If you want to go to the Olympics, you have to train for (*it*, *them*).
- Sue had three dollars in her wallet, but now one of (*it*, *them*) is missing.
- Vera dropped the pliers in the grass and then spent an hour looking for (*it*, *them*).
- Mathematics was more than an interest for Leora; (*it*, *they*) became a passion.
- Roxanne decided not to wear her shorts because (*it*, *they*) had become threadbare.
- He had only seventy-five cents; would (*it*, *they*) be enough to pay for the juice?

**EXERCISE B** Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Cross out each incorrectly used pronoun, and write the correct pronoun above it. Then, circle the antecedent.

**Example 1.** Please put the scissors back when you are finished with <sup>them</sup>~~it~~.

- Francesca decided to take civics because she could fit them into her schedule.
- Malik has lost his eyeglasses; he needs it for basketball.
- Take the binoculars out of its case, please.
- Did you hear the news? Could they be any worse?
- Of all the pants you could have worn, that could be the worst.

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement G

- 8x.** Use a singular pronoun to refer to the title of a creative work (such as a book, song, movie, or painting).

**EXAMPLE** Have you read “**The Bells**” by E. A. Poe? **It** is one of my favorite poems to read aloud.

- 8y.** Use a singular pronoun to refer to the name of a country, city, or organization.

**EXAMPLE** **Calloway Motors** will have **its** grand opening on Saturday.

**EXERCISE** Most of the following sentences contain an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Draw a line through each incorrectly used pronoun, and write the correct pronoun above it. If a sentence is already correct, write C next to the sentence number.

**Example 1.** Hartwig Interiors is redesigning <sup>its</sup>~~their~~ own showroom.

- Discount Appliances used to be located on Burnet Avenue; they stood where a beautiful orchard used to grow.
- The Cowboys* is one of my dad’s favorite movies, and he has seen it several times.
- After Tranh was assigned to read *Great Expectations*, the Charles Dickens masterpiece, he managed to finish them over the weekend.
- The Netherlands is also known as Holland, and its citizens are known as the Dutch.
- The Sons of the Desert, devoted to the comic films of Laurel and Hardy, was founded in 1964, and my grandfather has been a member of them since 1967.
- After I read “Flowers for Algernon,” I found out that Hollywood has adapted them for the movies twice.
- As you read T. S. Eliot’s “The Hollow Men,” consider the effect of them on your imagination.
- Jacques Offenbach never completed his opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*; Ernest Guiraud finished them after Offenbach’s death.
- When you come to the Narrows, where so many ships have gone down, go around them.
- Several of my uncles are members of the Knights of Columbus; my father has also been a member of it.

## Review A: Subject-Verb Agreement

**EXERCISE A** Circle the subject in each of the following sentences. If the underlined verb does not agree with the subject, cross out the verb and write the correct verb above it. If the sentence is already correct, write C before the sentence number.

**Example 1.** The sailors on the ship <sup>have</sup>~~has~~ all been granted shore leave.

1. My shoes and my shirt lies at the end of the bed.
2. Either Dr. Chen or Dr. Montoya plan to perform the operation.
3. Don't someone who has read the books have something to say?
4. One by one, the flock of birds have descended into the trees.
5. Afternoons are the best time for a nap.
6. The officers of the Forest Service doesn't approve of campfires during a drought.
7. Gymnastics or electronics is the only class with spaces available.
8. There are many students who use study hall to finish their homework.
9. Most of the horses grazes in the upper pasture during the summertime.
10. Both of the flute players hopes to audition for the first chair in the orchestra.

**EXERCISE B** Circle the subject in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the form of the verb or contraction in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** Everyone in the senior class (is, are) looking forward to the field trip.

11. Neither Jay nor Sonya (is, are) going to the folk festival this year.
12. Each of the children (has, have) gone to bed by now.
13. Anyone who listens to the singer's music (has, have) to get up and dance.
14. Our cat Conrad and our dog Padgett (like, likes) to sleep on the bed.
15. Katherine told me that the League of Women Voters (is, are) sponsoring a debate between the two candidates this Wednesday.
16. All of my aunts and uncles (remember, remembers) when my grandmother's birthday is.
17. (Doesn't, Don't) most people in our town recycle their bottles and cans?
18. Either of the girls (is, are) happy to help you rake your lawn.
19. When (is, are) the football team scheduled to play Reed City?
20. Enrique told me that he (don't, doesn't) care for okra.

## Review B: Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

**EXERCISE A** Circle the antecedent for the underlined pronoun in each of the following sentences. If the underlined pronoun does not agree with the antecedent, cross out the pronoun and write the correct pronoun over it.

**Example 1.** All of the young men have left ~~his~~<sup>their</sup> childhoods behind.

- Many of the science fair contestants have brought his or her own equipment.
- One of the girls has gotten mud all over their shoes.
- Every member of the class brought their own pencil to the test on Friday.
- Either Sergio or Michael will need to bring their boombox to the party.
- No one in the family remembered to bring their key to the cabin by the lake.
- Aren't all of your uncles taking a fishing pole with him on vacation?
- A few of the students told his or her parents about the pop quiz on Friday.
- Each of the kittens cried for their mother.
- One of the young women was certain that the award for Best Class Song was going to them.
- Some of the books showed Princess Diana on its covers.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, circle the antecedent for the pronouns in parentheses. Then, underline the pronoun in parentheses that agrees with the antecedent.

**Example 1.** Each of the children handed the teacher (his or her, ~~their~~) answer sheet.

- The Barretts of Wimpole Street* is my mother's favorite film; she has seen (*it*, *them*) several times.
- The cast of the play decided to have a party after (*its*, *their*) last performance.
- One of the ships was able to unload most of (*its*, *their*) cargo before the hurricane struck.
- The Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies will publish Professor Becker's book as part of (*its*, *their*) publication series.
- Having mastered electronics, Judith is very good at explaining (*it*, *them*) to the class.
- Have you ever wondered why birds resting on a branch or a telephone wire tuck (*its*, *their*) heads under their wings during a storm?
- The council didn't get to (*its*, *their*) final vote until nine o'clock that night.
- Someone from the boys' basketball team left (*his*, *their*) shoes on the bench.
- Those young women will carry (*her*, *their*) own luggage onto the plane.
- Neither of the girls can tell me where (*her*, *their*) sleeping bag is.

## Review C: Agreement

**EXERCISE A** Most of the following sentences contain an error in subject-verb agreement. Cross out the incorrect form of the verb, and write the correct verb form above it. If a sentence is already correct, write C next to the sentence number.

**Example 1.** Grand Rapids, Michigan, <sup>is</sup>~~are~~ a center of furniture manufacturing.

1. The sound of all these birds echo all around the courtyard.
2. Economics seem like a difficult subject to some people.
3. Fifteen feet of rope were necessary to secure the boat to the dock.
4. Moving with one mind, the crowd surge toward the stage.
5. Don't he know which way he's going?
6. Where is the books that I left on the kitchen counter?
7. Either Kadonna or her brother is responsible for sending out the invitations for the reunion.
8. Everybody who contributed to the charities are welcome at the annual dinner.
9. About ten percent of the furniture are sitting in a warehouse.
10. Monday afternoons are the best time to make an appointment with Dr. Secada.

**EXERCISE B** Most of the following sentences contain an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. Cross out the incorrect pronoun, and write the correct pronoun form above it. If a sentence is already correct, write C next to the sentence number.

**Example 1.** The Netherlands is in Europe; adjacent to <sup>it</sup>~~them~~ are Belgium and Germany.

11. Mikki has saved fifty dollars; she plans to use them to buy a present.
12. As soon as we heard the news from France, we passed them along to our friends at home.
13. After seeing the film *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*, Declan recommended them to his brother.
14. Candace or Melanie will bring their soccer ball to the championship match.
15. The gymnastics team discussed their fears about going to the meet.
16. No one who has ever seen Angkor Wat will ever forget their first impression of it.
17. We heard that some of the boys' ski team are bringing his own skis.
18. Carl or David will bring his football to the game.
19. After you're done with the binoculars, please put it back in the case.
20. The jury debated the verdict among itself.



## Review D: Agreement

**EXERCISE** Each of the following sentences contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement or subject-verb agreement. Draw a line through each incorrect verb or pronoun, and write the correct verb form or pronoun form above it.

**Examples** 1. Neither Los Angeles nor San Francisco <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ the capital of California.

2. Either Dad or Uncle Tom will pick us up in <sup>his</sup> ~~their~~ car.

3. Nicoletta or Jacqueline will present their book report to the class tomorrow.
4. Everybody in our classes were informed in advance about the change in schedule.
5. Some of the best paintings are next-door; let's look at it first.
6. Here is the books you ordered online, Ms. Shimeda.
7. Each of the teachers spoke to their own class.
8. Some of the groceries has already been placed in the pantry.
9. Either the players or the coach call timeout.
10. A theater and a rehearsal room was added to the high school last year.
11. Everyone who completed their project on time was rewarded with a bright, shiny apple.
12. Nobody in the caravan were paying attention when the camel went astray.
13. The Cho family will take their vacation this year in Thailand.
14. When the shears were broken, Eric found time to repair it.
15. Doesn't the dog and cat get along?
16. Macaroni and cheese are my favorite dish.
17. If you spill all of the cereal, make sure to clean them up.
18. Neither Uncle Lyle nor Uncle Tector remembered where their boots were.
19. The presence of thousands of peacekeeping troops assure the villagers of their safety.
20. When presented with a legal summons, a citizen has an obligation to respond to them.
21. We will listen to half of *Nights in the Garden of Spain* this morning, and we will hear the rest of them this afternoon.
22. Neither the students nor the players is likely to forget the homecoming game.

## Proofreading Application: Speech

Good writers are generally good proofreaders. Readers tend to admire and trust writing that is error-free. Make sure that you correct all errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in your writing. Your readers will have more confidence in your words if you have done your best to proofread carefully.

Even though a speech is meant to be heard, not seen, a speaker who violates the rules of agreement covered in this chapter still runs the risk of confusing listeners. Agreement errors can potentially cloud the meaning of your ideas and diminish your credibility as a speaker. Therefore, before you give a speech or an oral report, you should make sure that the words you will deliver are free of agreement errors. After all, as a speaker, you want listeners to focus on your words, not on your mistakes.

### PROOFREADING ACTIVITY

Find and correct the agreement errors in the following speech. Use proofreading symbols to make your corrections.

**Example** Over the past month, the whole orchestra <sup>has</sup>~~have~~ been practicing for its annual concert.

Mr. Frost, our conductor, and the orchestra welcomes you to our first annual concert and chorus. Each of the members of our orchestra has spent many hours of their own free time practicing for this event. Most of the selections tonight was written or arranged by American composers. We are proud to say that several of our own students have contributed his or her own compositions to the evening's entertainment. A few of our selections includes choral accompaniment. Our chorus are directed by Mrs. Theresa Fernandez. Either Mrs. Fernandez or Mr. Frost will be introducing their selections as the evening continues. "The Stars and Stripes Forever" are our first piece.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to the music department may give their contribution to the students at the table in the front hall. All of us at King Middle School invites you to sit back and enjoy the show.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

for CHAPTER 8: AGREEMENT **pages 155–72**

# Literary Model: Short Story

“Sam,” says Bill, “I suppose you’ll think I’m a renegade, but I couldn’t help it. . . . The boy is gone. I sent him home. All is off. There was martyrs in old times,” goes on Bill, “that suffered death rather than give up the particular graft they enjoyed. None of ‘em ever was subjugated to such supernatural tortures as I have been. . . .”

“What’s the trouble, Bill?” I asks him.

“I was rode,” says Bill, “the ninety miles to the stockade, not barring an inch. Then, when the settlers was rescued, I was given oats. . . . I tell you, Sam, a human can only stand so much. I takes him by the neck of his clothes and drags him down the mountain. On the way he kicks my legs black and blue from the knees down. . . .”

—from “The Ransom of Red Chief” by O. Henry

**EXERCISE A** In the excerpt above, underline each sentence that contains an error in subject-verb agreement. Then, on the lines provided, write these sentences, circling each subject and each verb that do not agree in number.

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**EXERCISE B** Describe the characters in this excerpt. Why do you think O. Henry has his characters speak in such a manner?

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## USAGE | Language in Context: Literary Model

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# Writing Application: Directions

Sometimes, phrases and clauses that come between a subject and its verb can trick writers into agreement problems. One quick way to check for correct agreement is to block out the intervening phrase or clause with your thumb and read the sentence aloud. Another way is to bracket the intervening phrase or clause and read the subject and its verb together. In most cases, by focusing on the subject and its verb in a sentence, you will be able to decide whether the sentence contains an agreement error.

**AGREEMENT PROBLEM** The labels on the suitcase has fallen off.  
**CORRECT AGREEMENT** The labels [on the suitcase] <sup>have</sup> fallen off.  
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## Writing Activity

The elementary school you attended needs help with a nature scavenger hunt. You will write directions for kids to use as they collect various natural items to bring back to their science classes. Write clues that will help kids find six items, using prepositional phrases to tell kids where to look. For instance, you might say, “These things on the oak tree turn into leaves.” Be sure that the subject of the sentence agrees with its verb.

- PREWRITING** First, choose six items that kids can find easily and that will prove interesting in the science classroom. Obviously, you will not ask the kids to find anything that might hurt them—no stinging insects or thorny briars! Think of things that kids can locate while walking around school grounds with their teachers.
- WRITING** Next, for each item, devise clues that require kids to puzzle out what and where the items are. Your first goal is clarity: Will the clues guide kids to the items, challenging them to think hard but not frustrating them? Use prepositional phrases to point out the items’ locations. Second, consider diction, or word choice. Use simple words and sentences that school children will understand.
- REVISING** Directions, whether straightforward or purposefully puzzling, should be tested for accuracy. Follow your own directions to be sure that they work. Finally, consider your tone. The scavenger hunt should be a fun outdoor activity, and the kids will be excited to be out of their classrooms for a while. Match their excitement with your word choice and energetic tone.
- PUBLISHING** Check your directions for errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation. Also, be sure to look for errors in subject-verb agreement. Do not let mistakes throw the kids off track as they hunt! Then, meet with the kids’ teachers and make any final adjustments needed.

## Extending Your Writing

If you enjoyed this exercise, you could develop it into a longer writing project. You may have heard the idea that people truly know a subject when they can teach it. You might develop a guided discussion and work sheets for the kids to use when they return to the classroom with their items. Then, lead them through a period of study, using your written materials.