

Avoiding Shifts in Pronoun Number and Person

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Pick ONE person and ONE number and stick with it. A NUMBER shift happens when a singular antecedent (a student, everyone, each person) is followed by a plural pronoun (they, their). A PERSON shift happens when you start in third person ('a student', 'one', 'people') and switch to second person ('you'). Fix it by making both sides plural OR by keeping both sides in the same person.

PRACTICE

Choose the correct answer for each question.

- Which sentence has an INAPPROPRIATE shift in pronoun person?
 - If students want to improve in math, they should practice every day.
 - If you want to improve in math, you should practice every day.
 - If a student wants to improve in math, you should practice every day.
 - If one wants to improve in math, one should practice every day.
- Which revision fixes the shift in this sentence? 'When a person is reading a long novel, you should take notes in the margins.'
 - When a person is reading a long novel, he or she should take notes in the margins.
 - When you are reading a long novel, they should take notes in the margins.
 - When a person is reading a long novel, one should take notes in the margins.
 - When people are reading a long novel, you should take notes in the margins.
- Which sentence has correct pronoun agreement (no shift in NUMBER)?
 - Every athlete must bring their own water bottle to practice.
 - Each of the dancers forgot their costume bag at home.
 - Everyone in the chorus raised their voice for the final note.
 - All of the volunteers brought their own snacks to the event.
- Which sentence corrects this shift? 'A reader should pay attention to details so you don't miss important clues.'
 - A reader should pay attention to details so they don't miss important clues.
 - Readers should pay attention to details so they don't miss important clues.
 - You should pay attention to details so a reader doesn't miss important clues.
 - One should pay attention to details so you don't miss important clues.



5. Which sentence contains an inappropriate shift in PERSON?
- A. If we want to win the spelling bee, we have to study hard.
 - B. When students join the team, they get a uniform on the first day.
 - C. If one wants to win the spelling bee, you have to study hard.
 - D. When you join the team, you get a uniform on the first day.
6. Which sentence has NO pronoun shift?
- A. After the runners finished the race, they collected their medals.
 - B. After a runner finishes the race, you collect your medal.
 - C. After each runner finishes the race, they collect their medal.
 - D. After one finishes the race, you collect your medal.
7. Read the paragraph: 'A student who wants to do well on the test should plan ahead. You should make a study schedule and stick to it.' What is the BEST way to revise it?
- A. Change 'A student' to 'You' in the first sentence.
 - B. Change 'should plan ahead' to 'should plans ahead'.
 - C. Change 'a student' to 'students' and 'You' to 'They'.
 - D. Students who want to do well on the test should plan ahead. They should make a study schedule and stick to it.
8. Which sentence is correct?
- A. Neither of the boys remembered to bring their lunch today.
 - B. Neither of the boys remembered to bring his lunch today.
 - C. Neither of the boys remembered to bring our lunch today.
 - D. Neither of the boys remembered to bring you lunch today.
9. Which sentence has an inappropriate shift?
- A. If people want fresh tomatoes, they should plant them in May.
 - B. We packed our lunches and grabbed our backpacks before the trip.
 - C. When a hiker reaches the summit, you can see three mountain ranges.
 - D. Travelers must show their passports before boarding the plane.
10. Rewrite this paragraph to remove ALL pronoun shifts. Use third-person plural throughout. 'When a soccer player joins a new team, you have to learn the coach's signals. They also need to introduce yourself to your teammates.'



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9 A B C D
- 10

Explanations


1. C	C starts with the third-person 'a student' and shifts to second-person 'you' — a classic person shift. A stays in third-person plural ('students...they'). B stays in second-person throughout ('you...you'). D stays in third-person formal ('one...one').
2. A	The original starts in third-person ('a person'). Keep the same person: 'he or she'. A fixes the shift. B switches the FIRST clause to 'you' but then jumps to 'they' — two shifts in one sentence. C uses 'one', which mismatches 'a person' (a different register). D leaves 'you' in the second clause, so the shift remains.
3. D	'All of the volunteers' is plural, so plural 'their' matches — no shift. A, B, and C all pair singular indefinite pronouns ('every athlete', 'each', 'everyone') with the plural 'their'. Grade 6 standards test traditional singular agreement.
4. B	The cleanest fix is to make BOTH sides plural: 'Readers...they'. B does this. A still mixes singular antecedent 'a reader' with plural 'they' (a number shift). C reverses the shift but still has one (you → a reader). D mixes formal 'one' with 'you' (a person shift).
5. C	C shifts from third-person 'one' to second-person 'you' — a person shift. A stays in first-person plural ('we...we'). B stays in third-person plural ('students...they'). D stays in second-person ('you...you').
6. A	A is fully consistent: plural antecedent 'runners' + plural 'they/their'. B shifts from third-person 'a runner' to second-person 'you'. C pairs singular 'each runner' with plural 'they/their' (number shift). D shifts from formal 'one' to 'you' (person shift).
7. D	D rewrites BOTH sentences in third-person plural — no shift, no awkward 'he or she' repetition. A creates a different shift (second-person throughout the second sentence but still mixes tone). B introduces a subject-verb error. C names the right idea but is harder to apply cleanly than D's full rewrite.
8. B	'Neither' is singular, so the pronoun must be singular. The antecedents are both male ('boys'), so 'his' is correct. A uses plural 'their' with singular 'neither' (number shift). C shifts to first-person 'our'. D uses second-person 'you' as a possessive — wrong form AND wrong person.
9. C	C shifts from third-person 'a hiker' (singular) to second-person 'you' (and also a number shift). A is consistent (people...they). B is consistent (we...our). D is consistent (travelers...their).



10. **Answer:** When soccer players join a new team, they have to learn the coach's signals. They also need to introduce themselves to their teammates.
The original has multiple shifts: third-person 'a soccer player' → second-person 'you' → 'they' → second-person 'yourself/your'. The cleanest fix is to start plural and stay plural: 'soccer players...they...themselves...their'. Accept any version that keeps every pronoun in third-person plural and fixes 'yourself' to 'themselves'. Mark wrong if any 'you', 'your', or 'yourself' is left in the paragraph, or if the student keeps singular 'a soccer player' with plural 'they'.



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