

Connect the Dots: Drawing the Line Between Pronouns and Antecedents for Perfect Agreement

Pronouns and Antecedents

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	7th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	200 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	5-6

Essential Question

How will understanding the relationship between pronouns and antecedents improve ACT performance?

Summary

In this lesson, students will learn how to correctly use pronouns and antecedents, a common skill tested on the ACT English section. They will review how pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number, person, and case and practice to avoid vague or ambiguous references. Students will analyze sample ACT-style questions that highlight errors in agreement, pronoun case, and unclear references. Guided and independent practice will help students apply strategies for spotting and correcting these errors under timed conditions. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to identify and correct pronoun-antecedent mistakes confidently, improving their accuracy on the ACT.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a "Who Are You?" partner activity where they answer with nouns, leading to a class discussion that introduces the concepts of pronouns and antecedents.

Explore

Working in pairs, students use categorical highlighting to identify four types of pronoun errors in assigned sentences, then collaborate in groups of four to create posters defining each error type with original examples before conducting a gallery walk.

Explain #1

Students apply a modified Claim-Evidence-Reasoning approach, "Grammar Forensics," to analyze ambiguous writing samples, creating "Sleuth the Sentence" analyses and a four-panel comic strip that demonstrate multiple interpretations and identify the correct meaning with supporting evidence.

Explain #2:

Students review subject-object pronoun rules using ACT prep resources, annotate materials using the

CUS and Discuss strategy to identify their comfort level with different concepts, and participate in a Sounds Right? Sounds Off? formative assessment.

Extend

Students complete a timed, four-minute ACT-style reading passage with pronoun-antecedent questions, then discuss answers as a class to build test-taking stamina and apply learned concepts.

Evaluate

Students compose a 1–2-page narrative from one of four prompts, highlighting pronouns and antecedents in different colors while maintaining consistent point of view, then reflect on their learning using an emoji indicator.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - English (6-12)

TOD 603: Use a word, phrase, or sentence to accomplish a subtle purpose (e.g., adding emphasis or supporting detail, expressing meaning through connotation)
SST 502: Maintain consistent and logical verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of the preceding clause or sentence
USG 303: Ensure straightforward pronoun-antecedent agreement
USG 502: Ensure pronoun-antecedent agreement when the pronoun and antecedent occur in separate clauses or sentences
USG 503: Recognize and correct vague and ambiguous pronouns
USG 602: Correctly use reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns its and your, and the relative pronouns who and whom

Oklahoma Academic Standards English Language Arts Vertical Progressions, Grades 6–12 (6th-12th)

11-12.5.R.1: Students will apply their knowledge of syntax (e.g., parallel structure, active and passive voice, and phrases/clauses) to analyze and evaluate a variety of texts, understanding that usage and convention change over time.
11-12.5.W.2: Students will demonstrate command of Standard American English (i.e., grammar, mechanics, and usage) in writing, presentations, and/or multimodal literacies to convey specific meanings and ideas, intentionally departing from standard usage to achieve a specific effect.

Attachments

- ACT Challenge—Connect the Dots.docx
- ACT Challenge—Connect the Dots.pdf
- ACT Challenge—Item Analysis—Connect the Dots.docx
- ACT Challenge—Item Analysis—Connect the Dots.pdf
- ACT Questions—A Road of Endless Horror—Connect the Dots.docx
- ACT Questions—A Road of Endless Horror—Connect the Dots.pdf
- Grammar Forensics—Connect the Dots.docx
- Grammar Forensics—Connect the Dots.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Connect the Dots.pptx
- Narrative Prompts and Rubric—Connect the Dots.docx
- Narrative Prompts and Rubric—Connect the Dots.pdf
- Pronoun Errors—Connect the Dots.docx
- Pronoun Errors—Connect the Dots.pdf
- Pronoun Review Prompts Guide and Answer Key—Connect the Dots.docx
- Pronoun Review Prompts Guide and Answer Key—Connect the Dots.pdf
- Sounds Right_Sounds Off—Connect the Dots.docx
- Sounds Right_Sounds Off—Connect the Dots.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Pronoun Errors—Connect the Dots (attached; one table per group)
- Sounds Right? Sounds Off? (attached; one pair of cards per student)
- Pronoun Review Prompts Guide and Answer Key (attached; one table per group)
- ACT Questions: A Road of Endless Horror (attached; one per student)
- Narrative Prompts and Rubric (attached; one per student)
- ACT Challenge (attached; one per student)
- ACT Challenge—Item Analysis (optional; one per student)
- Chart paper
- Markers

- Sticky notes

45 minutes

Preparation for the Lesson

1. Each student will need four different colors of highlighters for the Pronoun Errors activity in the Explore section of the lesson. To make grading easier, it helps if all students use the same color markers.
2. Print and cut multiple copies of the four tables from the Pronoun Errors handout. Make sure you have enough tables so that partners can be paired with another partner group who have the same table.
3. Print and cut out the Sounds Right? Sounds Off? cards. Laminate before cutting so that you can use the cards and strategy for other lessons.

45 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate this lesson. Transition through **slides 2-4** to review the title, essential questions, and lesson objectives in as much detail as you think necessary.

Display **slide 5**. Ask students to find a partner and sit facing each other. Designate one student as Partner A and one as Partner B. Tell the students to follow the Who Are You? instructions where Partner A begins to repeatedly ask the question, "Who Are You?" for 60 seconds. Remind the students to keep the energy high and maintain eye contact throughout each round. At the end of Round 1, switch partners and restart the timer for Round 2. Remind students that their answers must be a noun.

Advance to **slide 6**. Ask students to share some of their common nouns.

Ask the students to think about these questions:

- What is one thing you found surprising about this activity?
- What part of speech replaces the nouns you just listed? Ask for student responses until you get the answer, "pronoun."
- What is it called when a pronoun refers to a noun? Again, ask for student responses. If you don't get an answer, share with students: *The noun to which a pronoun refers is called the antecedent.* Use **slide 7** to help students learn the word "antecedent."

Move on to **slide 8**. Ask students to share an answer to the question, "Who are you?" An example might be "student." Then, ask a student to put that noun into a sentence with a pronoun. An example might be, "She, a dedicated student, completes her assignments on time." Clearly show the connection between the pronoun to the antecedent with an arrow or connecting dots.

Teacher's Note

The text selected for this lesson, "A Road of Endless Horror", is an article about the Bataan Death March which took place in the Philippines during World War II. This text enables students to analyze how personal interviews and anecdotes function in informational writing. Historical articles are often used on the English portion of the ACT test.

60 minutes

Explore

Keep students in partner groups and advance to **slide 9**. Distribute the **Pronoun Errors Handout**, explain Categorical Highlighting, and assign each pair a group of sentences to highlight. Explain that each pair of partners will highlight each type of pronoun error in different colors:

- number disagreement (singular/plural),
- gender disagreement,
- person disagreement (1st, 2nd, 3rd person),
- vague or ambiguous references.

Students should discuss their justifications as they work together and decide which sentence numbers have the same type of error.

When students have completed highlighting, combine pairs with the same sentence groups (A, B, C, D) into groups of four. Have the pairs share their answers, identifying which two sentences have the same kind of error, and discuss any discrepancies.

Transition to **slide 10.** Hand out chart paper and markers. Each group of four should use their assigned color marker to write a definition for that color on their poster, including:

- Group Name
- Each type of error
- Definition of type of error
- Example of a “new” sentence with that type of error

Display the poster example on **slide 11**. Note that students’ sentences should be original, not reused from the passage.

When the posters are finished, have the students Gallery Walk the posters, making mental note of any differences they notice. Discuss the noted differences as a class.

45 minutes

Explain #1

Explain to the students that they will complete a modified Claim–Evidence–Reasoning (C-E-R) activity and a Comic Strip for three different pieces of ambiguous writing called "**Grammar Forensics.**" Tell your students that the first two pieces of writing, a Social Media Post and a Text Message, will be completed using the format Sleuth the Sentence (in other words, the CER). For the final piece of writing, the Instructional Text, the students will complete the Comic Strip Analyzer.

Task 1: **Sleuth the Sentence**

Teacher's Note: Ambiguity

When explaining the example sentence on slide 12, ask the students to read the ambiguous statement to themselves, but YOU do not read it aloud, so students will not figure out which interpretation is correct based on the inflection in your voice.

Display **slide 12** showing the example "Police help dog bite victim; he was clearly shaken." Do not permit this example sentence to be read aloud!

Advance to **slide 13**, "Sleuth the Sentence." This C-E-R activity requires students to provide evidence for the intended meaning of the sentence. Begin by describing the ambiguity web as diagrammed on the slide. Identify possible interpretations with your students and compare them, using the box at right to walk students through the process. Then, investigate the text with your students using context clues, logical reasoning, or grammatical analysis. Finally, report their findings by explaining which interpretation is correct and why:

- What did the author mean?
- What is the evidence supporting this interpretation?
- Why did the ambiguity occur?
- How to fix it / how can the sentence be clarified?

Teacher's Note: Understanding Ambiguity

To develop greater understanding of ambiguity webs for students needing additional support, consider practicing them using model sentences such as, "The babysitter called the parent when she started crying" and "After the dog chased the cat, it ran under the porch."

To extend this idea or as a sponge activity (an activity to fill up a short time between tasks) for students who finish early, propose slight variations on the example sentence, such as inserting "to" in front of "bite," asking how the meaning would change with each variation.

Task 2: **Comic Strip Analyzer**

Progress to **slide 14**. Show the comic strip example. Describe what is shown in each panel. Explain that Panel 1 is the original sentence, which is the headline: "Police help dog bite victim."

Move on to Panel 2, an interpretation of one meaning of the sentence: Police assist a person who was bitten by a dog, which is shown in the drawing of a police officer bandaging a person's arm, with an offending dog nearby.

For Panel 3, another interpretation of the model sentence: Police assist a dog in biting a person. This is shown in the drawing of a police officer holding a leash while a dog bites a person, perhaps with the response "Absurd!" overwritten.

Finally, for Panel 4, Evidence and Conclusion: Read the written statement explaining which interpretation is correct and include the evidence and conclusion found as the text was analyzed.

Advance to **slide 15**. Present the students with the Grammar Forensics assignment, which includes the three different pieces of writing: a social media post, a text message, and an excerpt from an instruction manual. Pass out the Grammar Forensics handout. Students will work together to complete the Grammar Forensics assignment. Have them consider their work preferences, then form pairs or groups of three. Allow time for students to complete this assignment.

When complete, reflect on the Grammar Forensics activity by having the students engage with the 3-2-1 on **slide 16**. Hand out sticky notes for this activity. Present students with the writing prompt:

- What are three things you learned from the Grammar Forensics activity?
- What are two questions you still have about the pronoun-antecedent questions on the ACT test?
- What is one thing you found interesting?

Have the students turn in their answers to you so that you can check for understanding and what needs to be clarified.

45 minutes

Explain #2

Teacher's Note: Subject or Object?

Before starting Explain #2, review subjects and objects with students. Emphasize this principle: When a noun functions as a subject, replace it with a subject pronoun. When a noun functions as an object, replace it with an object pronoun.

Teacher's Note: The Bataan Death March

A few of the slides that describe grammar usage also display art created by American POW Ben Steele. A soldier stationed in the Philippines, Steele survived the 1942 Bataan Death March. He spent three and a half years as a Japanese prisoner of war. During his captivity in various POW camps in the Philippines and Japan, Steele secretly created hundreds of drawings documenting the brutal conditions, forced labor, starvation, and death that surrounded him. He sketched on whatever scraps of paper he could find, often using charcoal or makeshift materials, risking severe punishment or execution if discovered.

His drawings serve as direct visual testimony to the systematic mistreatment of Allied POWs—depicting skeletal prisoners, the infamous death march itself, mass graves, and the grinding daily reality of camp life. Steele managed to hide many of these works and bring them home after the war, though some were destroyed or confiscated.

After his liberation in 1945, Steele returned to Montana, earned art degrees on the GI Bill, and spent decades teaching art at Eastern Montana College. He continued to create artwork based on his wartime memories, eventually producing larger paintings that expanded on his POW sketches. His work stands as both historical documentation and artistic expression of one of the war's darkest chapters.

Advance to **slide 17** on subject-object pronouns. Discuss rules for grammatically correct pronoun usage on this slide and **slide 18**, then present “Pronoun Case” on **slide 19**, “Possessive Pronouns” on **slide 20**, and “Demonstrative Pronouns” on **slide 21**.

Remind students that these are rules of grammar, so they will need to remember these for the ACT test and keep them in a study folder for future reference.

Teacher's Note

While the use of personal pronouns has taken a shift culturally, for ACT testing purposes and grammatical correctness, the use of **he/she** and **they/them** will be used in the traditional manner.

Use the Sounds Right? Sounds Off? strategy for formative assessment. Give each student a set of *Sounds Right, Sounds Off* cards, then display **slide 22**. For each example sentence, allow think time, then have students hold up either the *Sounds Right* card (correct) or *Sounds Off* card (incorrect) to indicate their answer. When a sentence is incorrect, ask students to identify the error and propose a correction. Use the **Pronoun Review Prompts: Guide and Answer Key** to support your discussion. Continue with the sentence examples on **slide 23**.

45 minutes

Extend

Advance to **slide 24**. Distribute the **ACT Questions—A Road of Endless Horror** handout. This is an excerpt modified to replicate ACT style passages. Explain that students will have only four minutes to read and answer the questions according to ACT best practices. If needed, elaborate further by explaining that with the 2025 ACT updates, the English section is expected to have about 5 passages with 10 questions each (50 total). Students will have 35 minutes to complete the English sections of the ACT, which is about 42 seconds per question.

For this practice, the number of questions has been shortened to help students build stamina. Once the timer runs out, transition through **slides 25-29** and discuss the answers as a class.

ACT Best Practices

This activity reflects the newest enhancement changes ACT announced during the Summer 2025. For the latest information we encourage you to visit their website: ACT.org. Also, for more helpful ACT practice, check out our Power Up: English ACT Prep 10-Week Series where you will find ten 35-minute activities focused on English ACT standards.

30 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 30-31**. Explain to students that they will be writing a short narrative (1-2 pages) using a variety of pronouns and antecedents. Handout (or upload to your students' LMS) the **Narrative Prompts and Rubric**. Go over the instructions with the students. Students should choose one of the following prompts and write a 1–2-page narrative highlighting pronouns in yellow and their antecedents in blue (or any two colors of your choice). Inform students: they can select whether they want to write their narrative in first or third person, but they must remain consistent throughout the essay.

Narrative Prompts

- **The Impossible Choice**: You're a soldier on the march. Your friend is falling behind, but if you stop to help, you might both die. Another soldier offers to help carry him but warns you it could put all three of you at risk. Write about the decision you face and what you choose to do.
- **What I Saw Someone Else Do**: Write about witnessing another soldier make a choice during the march—helping someone, sharing food, protecting someone weaker, or abandoning a friend. You weren't directly involved, but you saw what happened between them.
- **The Story We Tell Differently**: Two survivors from the same unit remember the same incident completely differently—one thinks someone showed courage, the other thinks they abandoned their comrades. Write both versions of what happened.
- **The Friend Who Got Me Through**: Write about someone who helped you survive and someone whom you helped in return. How did you depend on each other when everything was falling apart?

Advance to **slide 32**. Before turning in their assignment, have students reflect upon their learning. Ask students to choose an emoji to indicate their individual understanding of pronouns, antecedents, and how they impact their understanding of those types of questions on the ACT. Ask students to place that emoji at the top of their narrative.

Teacher's Note

Other works by Ben Steele have been added to the end of the Slide Presentation for use in sponge and extension activities.

20 minutes

Follow-Up

For additional ACT practice we encourage you to provide students a copy of the **ACT Challenge** handout, which uses the same excerpt but is accompanied with different questions. These questions are more akin to what students would see on the actual ACT test as they are varied in topic and are closer to the estimated number of questions per passage. Use the provided **ACT Challenge—Item Analysis** handout to help review and explain the correct answers.

Resources

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- Steele, B. (n.d.). *Ben Steele's drawings* [Drawings]. American Experience | PBS. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/bataan-ben-steeles-drawings/