

Pronoun Agreement

A Matching Game

* Pronoun Agreement *

Another thing we have to match is pronouns. We match them with their antecedent.

Antecedent

=
The noun the pronoun refers to.

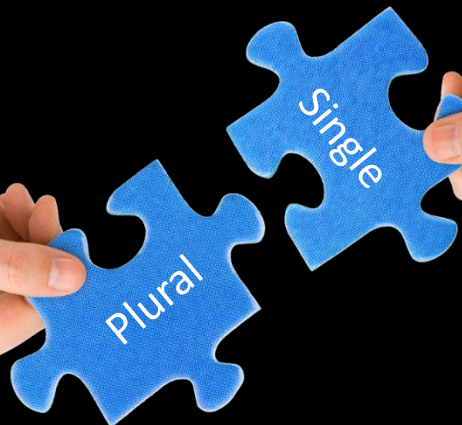
The man took his lunch
and ate at the park,
enjoying its fresh air.

Single

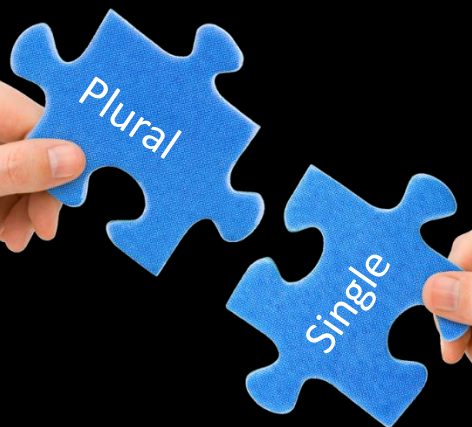
Plural

Plural

Single



The doctor started
his/her/their rounds.



Most of the time it's
easy, but once in a
while, things can get
tricky.

≈
This sentence isn't
hard to figure out if
you know whether it's
one or two, and if
there's only one
doctor, whether it's a
man or a woman.




If it's just one
person, and you
know the gender,
easy-peasy, lemon-
squeeze!

But what if you
don't know about
the gender?

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The doctor started his
rounds.

The doctor started her
rounds..



The doctor started
his or her rounds.



You can do "his or her"
but after a while that
can get very
repetitive.*

Many sources advise
that you alternate
male and female
pronouns throughout.

*In formal writing, do
not use the slash
(his/her).
Spell the *or* out!





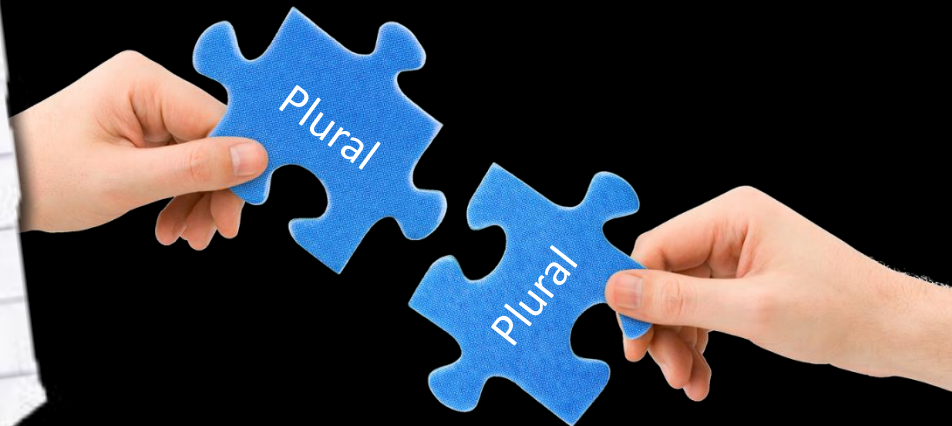
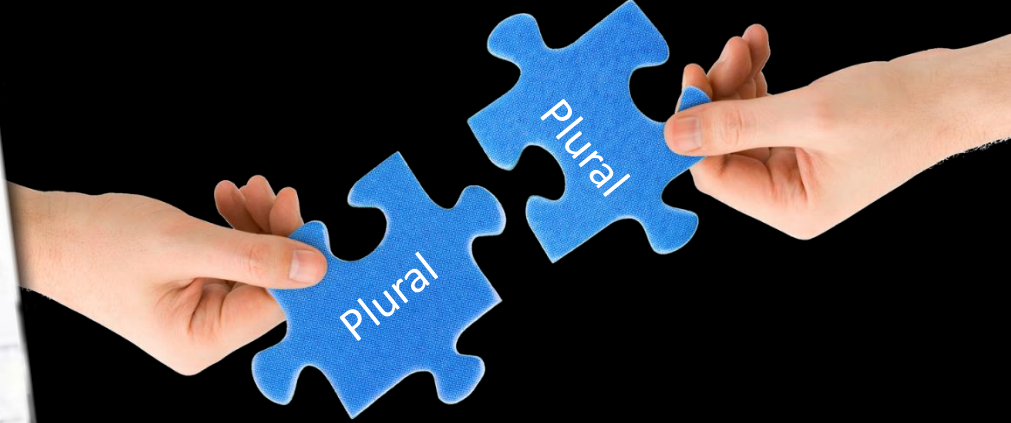
One way to avoid
this whole issue is
to make things
plural when you
can.



How do we do that?



The **doctors** started
their rounds.



☞ The way we talk changes, so the rules change too!

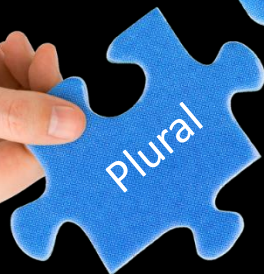
It is again acceptable to use they/their as a singular pronoun (this also applies to singular pronouns like each).

☞ However, if you can match according to the rules, do so. If that matching sounds really awkward, then you can change it. ☺

[Click here to read more!](#)

The doctor started
their rounds.





When a **person** has been drinking, **they** are more likely to speed.



However, many mistakes are born from trying to avoid the he/she construction. ☺

Notice how this sentence starts with the singular person, but then turns into the plural they. ~*~

2



To make it agree,
we have to make
them match.




Now, those changing rules
about they/their we looked
at a moment ago can apply
here, but isn't it more precise
to talk about people so that
we don't have to worry
about anyone's
interpretation of whether
they is singular or plural?




When a person has been
drinking, he or she is more
likely to speed.

When a person has been drinking, he is more
likely to speed.

When a person has been drinking, she is
more likely to speed.



When people have been
drinking, **they** are more
likely to speed.



Since this sentence is
a statement about
people in general, the
best bet is to make it
all plural.

****** If you're talking
about general
ideas, keep it
plural.



Anybody	Everybody	No one
Anyone	Everyone	Nothing
Anything	Everything	Somebody
Each	Neither	Someone
Either	Nobody	Something



Indefinite Pronouns
This gets trickier with
indefinite pronouns. ≈

When it's not obvious
whether they're singular
or plural, your best bet is
to just look them up. I
do!

Here are the **singular***
ones. Notice the
"thing," "one," and "body"
and remember those
only refer to one.

Make sure they
match!



However, also think
about sound, common
usage, and your
audience.



These are examples
of when the plural
they is particularly
useful and flows
better to our
modern ear.



Everybody should bring in **his or
her** essay when it's due.

Everybody should bring in **their** essay when
it's due.

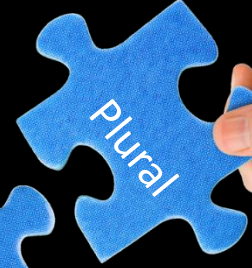
Nobody likes **his** feelings hurt.

Nobody likes **their** feelings hurt.





Of course, it's not
that easy. Some
work as both singular
and plural depending
on context.



Singular or Plural

All Most

Any None

More Some



**
**

Here are two
examples with at
least one singular, and one
plural.

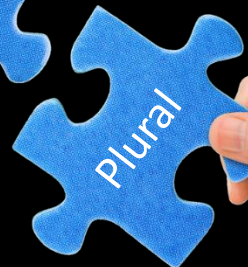
Again, picturing it in
your mind helps.

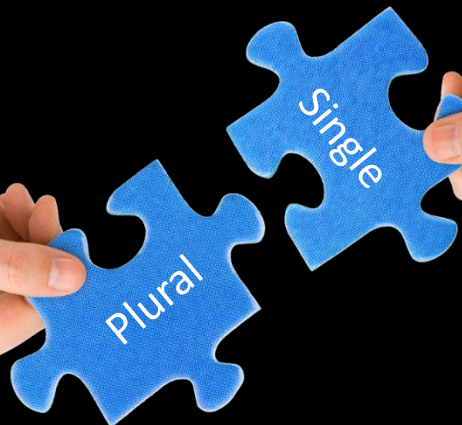
∞



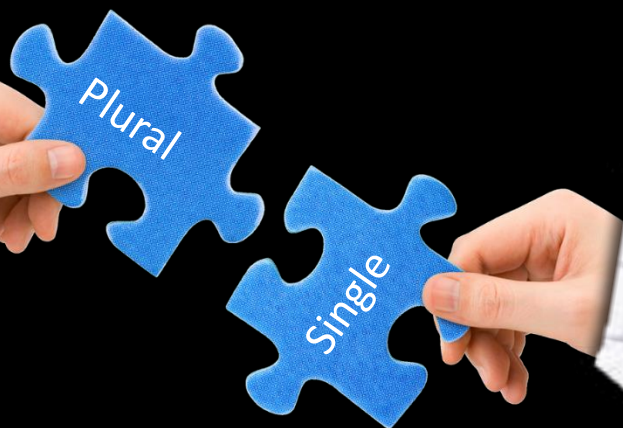
All of the newspaper **is**
soaked.

All of the sodas **are** cold.





The committee made
its/their decision.



Collective Nouns

With words that refer to groups, we have to decide whether the group is acting as individuals or as a whole.

You really have to picture what is going on in the sentence.

Is the committee making the decision as one or as many?

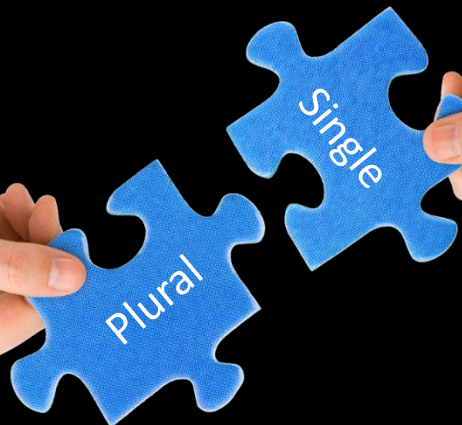
The committee is
acting as a unit, so
it's singular.



≈

The committee made
its decision.





The committee put
its/their signatures on
the proclamation.



✿
What about this one?
Again, picture it in your
mind.

Should it be single or
plural?



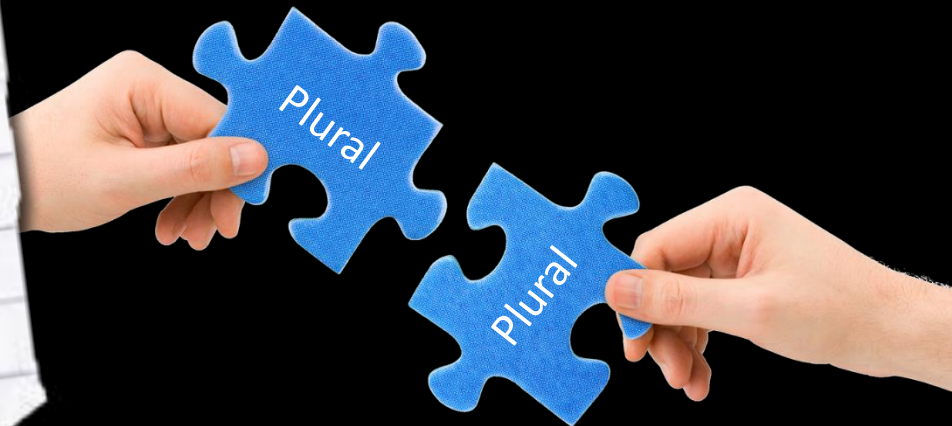
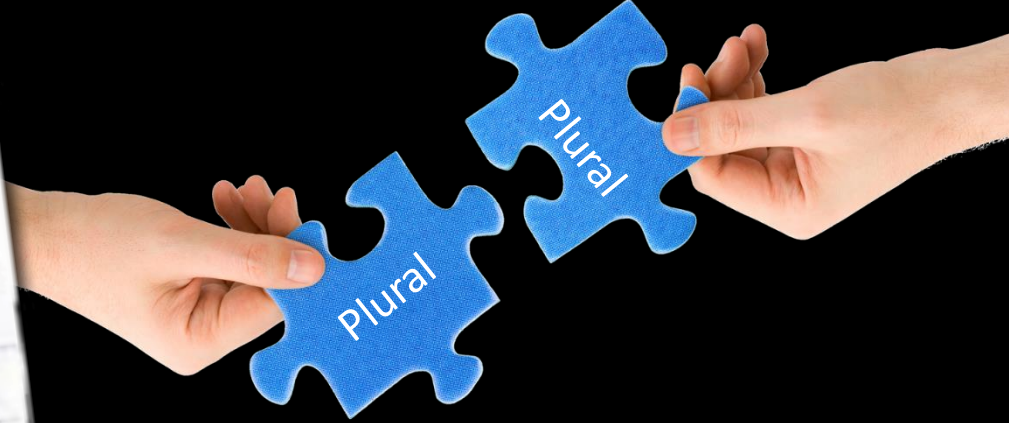
When you picture
that proclamation,
can you see all the
different
signatures?



There are going to
be numerous
signatures on that
piece of paper;
therefore, it's plural.



The committee put
their signatures on the
proclamation.



Vague

Unclear

It says in the article...

Imprecise

Nebulous

Vague Pronouns

A "just don't do that" note:

It doesn't say anything.
People do..



Don't call people it 

There are many ways to do this, and we will study them during the semester.



Just remember



NO "it says."



Signal

Phrases

The author says...

The writers point out that...

Due

Respect



Subjects do the action:
John gave the book to Mary.

Objects receive the action:
John gave the book to **Mary**.



Subjective/Objective

One place many people get confused by pronouns is in deciding whether to use the subjective or objective cases.

This happens with a lot of I/me and who/whom.

Your book gives you the list of the subjective and objective pronouns.

With I/me most
people get
confused when the
sentence has more
than one person in
the object place.



This conundrum has
a really easy trick
you can use to
figure it out.



2

The teacher told you and I
to get out our books

The teacher told you and **me**
to get out our books





The teacher told **I** to get
out my book

The teacher told **me** to
get out my book



The trick:
Take out the other
people.



Once we've done
that, it's easy to see
the answer.

Let's try again



The teacher told **me** to
get out my book.

The teacher told you and
me to get out our books.





Marissa and **I** are going
to get some coffee.

Marissa and **me** are
going to get some coffee.



Which one is correct?



Getting rid of the
other person to
check agreement
makes it easy.

Let's try with some
other pronouns.



I am going to get some
coffee.

Me am going to get some
coffee.



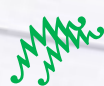


Manny is as nice as **he**.

Manny is as nice as **him**.



This one is tricky
because the sentence,
while correct, is missing
a word at the end.



Technically, it should
read...



Once we add in
that last word, the
answer is clear.

"Manny is as nice as him is"
just doesn't make sense.

If you're not sure
with a he/him,
she/her, or we/us
construction, reword
the sentence.



Manny is as nice as **he** is.

Him is as nice as Manny.

He is as nice as Manny.





Remember this:

Both whom and him end
with -m, so if you can
substitute him, use whom.

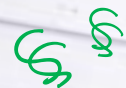


The most confusing
one is often who/whom.

However, there is a
trick for it too!

This also applies to
whoever/whomever.

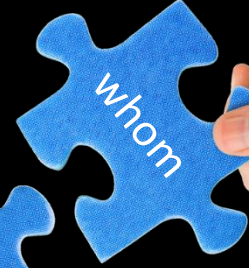
Let's give it a try!



Which one should we use?



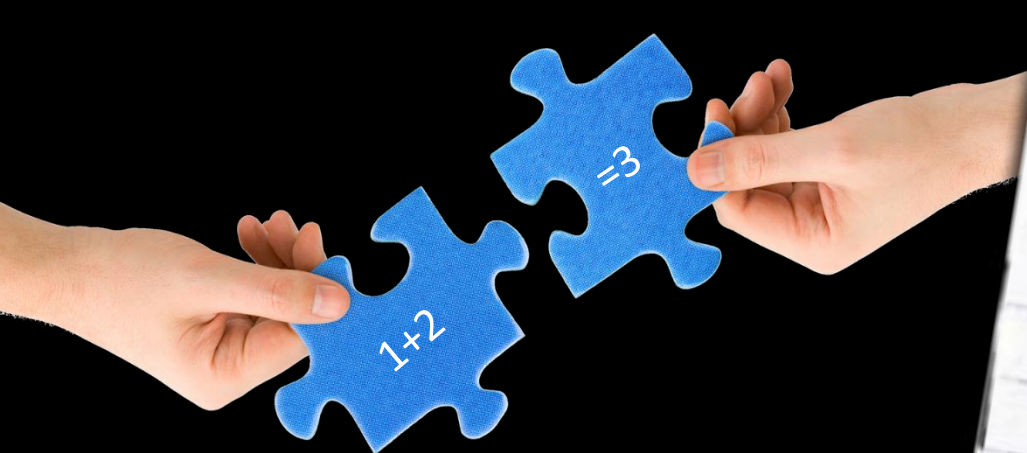
With questions, do the
trick by answering it..



Who did she say was
teaching the class?

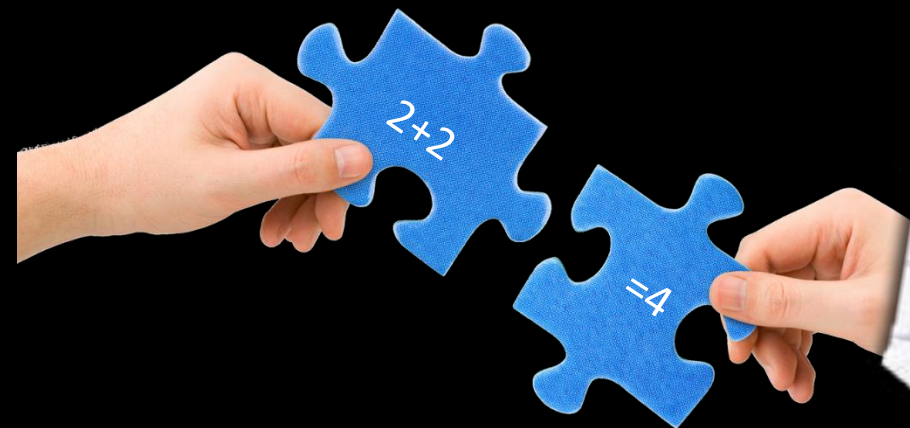
Whom did you say was
teaching the class.





She said **him** was teaching
the class.

She said **he** was teaching
the class.



Once you answer the
question, it's easy to
see which is the
correct choice.

**

She said who was
teaching the class?

Who did she say was
teaching the class?

**



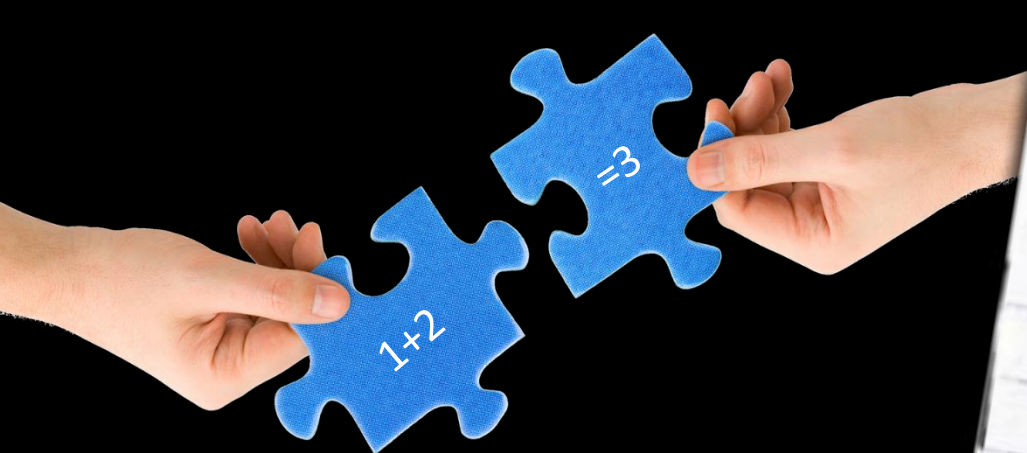
How about this one?
Answer the question
to figure it out. ~~~



Who should I talk to?

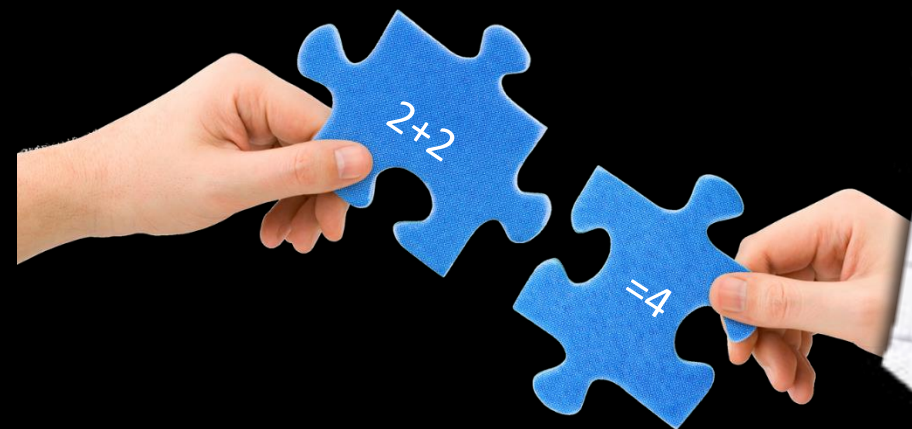
Whom should I talk to?





I should talk to **he**?

I should talk to **him**?



Again, much clearer.

I should talk to whom?
**
**

~* Here's another one: ~*

by

Jim is the one **who** told
me.

Jim is the one **whom** told
me.



Jim is the one **he** told me.

Jim is the one **him** told me.

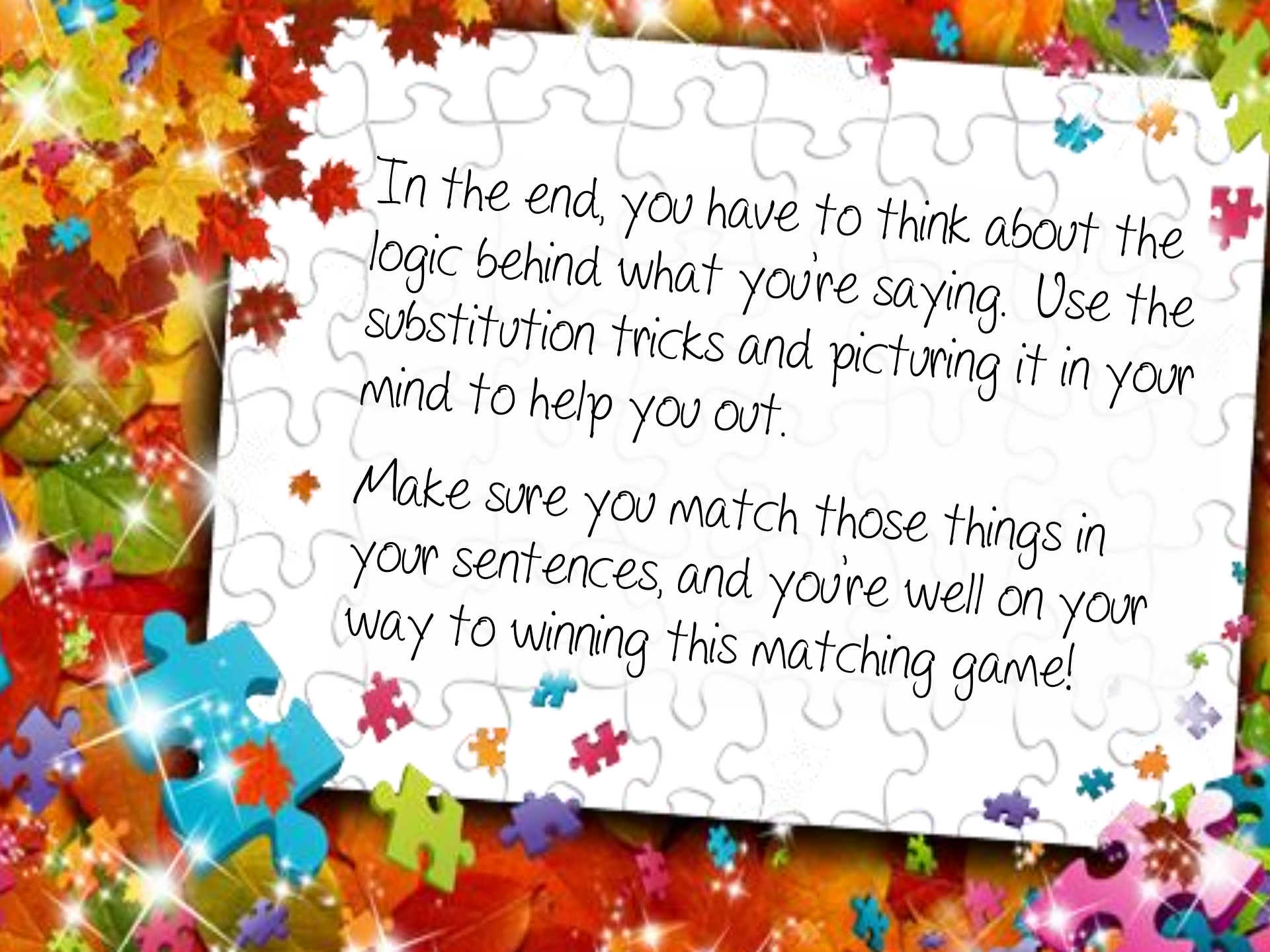


Again, much clearer.

****** Jim is the one **who**
told me. ******

When you change it
around, it won't
always be the
smoothest sentence,
but it will help you figure out
the who/whom problem.





In the end, you have to think about the logic behind what you're saying. Use the substitution tricks and picturing it in your mind to help you out.

- ★ Make sure you match those things in your sentences, and you're well on your way to winning this matching game!