Haut du formulaire

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| **Avoiding faulty Pronoun Reference**A **pronoun** is a word used to stand for (or take the place of) a **noun**. It should refer clearly to one, clear, unmistakable **noun** coming before the pronoun.  This noun is called the pronoun’s **antecedent**. Unfortunately, it is very easy to create a sentence that uses a pronoun WITHOUT a clear, unmistakable noun antecedent.**Clear Pronoun Reference**Do not use the pronouns *this, that, which,* and *it* without a clearly stated antecedent.Unclear: Nina will sing at the assembly, **which** I always enjoy.Clear: I always enjoy Nina’s singing at the assembly.Sometimes a pronoun will seem to have more than one antecedent. In such instances, reword the sentence to make the antecedent clear or omit the pronoun.Unclear: Raji had the wrestling advantage over Bob because he was heavier. (*Raji* or *Bob* could be the antecedent of *he*)Clear: Raji, because he was heavier, had the wrestling advantage over Bob. (*Raji* is the antecedent of *he*)Clear: Heavier than Bob, Raji had the wrestling advantage. (pronoun is eliminated)The pronouns *you* and *they* should not be used as indefinite pronouns. Instead, name the performer of the action.Indefinite: When the Hallelujah Chorus is performed, **you** should rise.Clear: When the Hallelujah Chorus is performed, **the audience** should rise.Clear: When the Hallelujah Chorus is performed, **everyone** should rise.**Example:**      https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref16.jpgThe pronoun ***it*** does not have a clear noun antecedent.As a result, the reader cannot know for sure whether Mabel sold the **disk** or the **cabinet**.  The pronoun reference is faulty here because the pronoun ***it*** has two antecedents.Such errors, called ***FAULTY*** or ***VAGUE***  **PRONOUN REFERENCE**, can confuse readers and obscure the intended meaning.There are **three** major pronoun reference errors.  **Error #1:  TOO MANY ANTECEDENTS**A pronoun should have only one antecedent.  That antecedent should be *clear* and *unmistakable*.**Look at this sentence:**     https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref2.jpgAnyone who reads this sentence would not know which item was to be fixed.Does ***it*** refer to the **radio** or the **car**?  The answer is unclear.In the above example, faulty pronoun reference occurs because the pronoun ***it*** has two possible noun antecedents.**To fix the sentence**, substitute a **noun** for the pronoun.https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref3.jpgHere is another example of faulty pronoun reference caused by more than one noun antecedent:                 https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref17.jpgThe pronoun reference is unclear:  Who will get the bonus - the **supervisors** or the **workers**?  ***They*** could refer to either group.In this example, the best way to fix the pronoun reference problem is to **rephrase** the sentence.                https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref18.jpg        **Error #2:  HIDDEN ANTECEDENTS** Faulty pronoun reference errors also occur when the pronoun's antecedent functions as an ***adjective*** rather than a noun. In such cases, the true antecedent is "hidden" or obscured from the reader because it has been subordinated to another noun. https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref15.jpgThe reader of this sentence might think that the **dish** was being eaten because ***dish*** appears to be the antecedent for the pronoun ***it***. Obviously, people do not eat dishes.  What this writer means to say is, "*We were tired of eating* ***candy***." However, ***candy*** cannot be the antecedent for ***it*** because ***candy***, situated in front of the noun ***dish***, is acting like an adjective.  Only nouns can be antecedents. https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref19.jpg     Here is another example of faulty pronoun reference caused by a hidden antecedent:                   https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref20.jpgObviously, ***she*** refers to ***Mary*** since a *house* would NOT be able to answer a phone.However, *Mary's* modifies *house - Mary's* is a **hidden antecedent** and, thus, is not clear.https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref4.jpghttps://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref21.jpgStill another way to repair this error is to **rephrase** the sentence.      https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref22.jpg**Error #3: NO ANTECEDENT AT ALL**Another kind of faulty / vague pronoun reference problem occurs when writers use a pronoun without giving the pronoun any antecedent at all.**Example:**                https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref23.jpgIn this example, the pronoun ***they*** has NO noun antecedent to which it can refer.   https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref24.jpg https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref7.jpg       Here is another example of a pronoun without any antecedent at all.               https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref25.jpgIn this example, the pronoun ***it*** has no antecedent to which it can refer.The reader knows that Mrs. Smith is "wealthy," but ***it*** cannot refer to ***wealthy*** because ***wealthy*** is not a  noun.There are at least two ways to repair this error.https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref26.jpg        With a noun (*wealth*) in the place of the pronoun (*it*), no antecedent is needed.https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref8.jpg        Now the pronoun ***it*** has a clear noun antecedent: ***money***.   Here is another example of a pronoun without any antecedent.              https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref27.jpg***It***, which appears at the very beginning of the sentence, has no noun antecedent at all.  In addition, the construction ***It says in the paper*** is unnecessarily wordy.We can repair this error by writing a more DIRECT version of "It says in the paper."**Example:**                https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref28.jpgAnother way to repair the "It says in the paper" error is to **rephrase** this part of the sentence.**Example:**               https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref29.jpgBoth methods of repairing this faulty/vague pronoun error eliminate the pronoun and, thus, eliminate the need for an antecedent.Below, another example shows how this error in pronoun reference occurs when a pronoun is used to stand for (refer to) a whole ***group of words*** INSTEAD OF ***one clear noun*** antecedent.               https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref10.jpgThe word ***which*** has no ***single, clear*** antecedent.Instead, it refers to the entire clause - "I did not attend the rally."However, a pronoun must always refer to a ***single, clear, unmistakable*** NOUN ANTECEDENT.We can repair this error in at least two ways.       https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref11.jpg       https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref12.jpgHere is another example of faulty pronoun reference where a pronoun is asked to refer to a whole group of words instead of a clear, single noun antecedent.                  https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref30.jpgThe problem here is ***This***.  Its antecedent is the **entire preceding sentence**.The reader cannot be sure whether Howard is very angry because:                1.  Meg ***telephoned***,                2.  Meg telephoned ***yesterday***, or                3.  Meg had ***not attended the meeting the day before***.There are at least two ways to repair this error and create a clear antecedent for ***this***:        https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref13.jpg        https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref14.jpg                     |  |  |

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