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.jpg  The 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.jpg  Anyone 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.jpg  Here is another example of faulty pronoun reference caused by more than one noun antecedent:  https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref17.jpg  The 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.jpg  The 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.jpg  Obviously, ***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.jpg  https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/proref21.jpg  Still 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.jpg  In 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.jpg  In 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.jpg  Another 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.jpg  Both 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.jpg  The 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.jpg  Here 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.jpg  The 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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