**Pronoun Reference**

**Pronoun Reference Guidelines**

2 pages long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

A pronoun, such as “it” or “they,” gets its meaning from its antecedent, the noun it substitutes for. Therefore, a pronoun must refer clearly and unmistakably to its antecedent in order for the meaning to be clear.

1. Make a pronoun refer clearly to one antecedent.

2. Place a pronoun close enough to its antecedent to ensure clarity.

3. Make a pronoun refer to a specific antecedent rather than to an implied one.

4. Use “it” and “they” to refer to definite antecedents.

5. Use “you” only to mean “you, the reader.”

6. Use the pronoun “it” only one way in a sentence.

7. Use “who,” “which,” and “that” for appropriate antecedents.

• Principal causes of unclear pronoun reference

• More than one possible antecedent

To keep birds from eating seeds, soak them in blue food coloring. (Blue birds?)

• Antecedent too far away.

Employees should consult with their supervisor who require vacation time. (The supervisor needs a vacation?)

• Antecedent only implied.

Many children begin reading on their own by watching television, but this should not be assumed by all parents. (What, reading or watching television?)

Pronoun Agreement Rules

1. A pronoun must agree in number with the word or words it replaces. If the word a pronoun refers to is singular, the pronoun must be singular; if that word is plural, the pronoun must be plural.

2. Pronouns should not shift unnecessarily in point of view. When writing a paper, be consistent in your use of first-, second-, or third-person pronouns.

3. When the antecedents connect with or or nor , the pronoun should agree with the nearer antecedent.

Either the principal or the teachers will have to give up their demands for the strike to end.

4. When the antecedent is an indefinite pronoun, such as everyone, each, anyone, someone, etc., use a singular pronoun in most cases.

For more specific information, see Pronouns - Chapter 12 in The Little Brown Handbook

FAULTY PRONOUN REFERENCE

Faulty Pronoun Reference is divided into three types: (1) divided references, (2) implied references, and (3) broad references.

Divided Pronoun Reference

Divided pronoun references are also termed ambiguous references, for the vague pronoun can refer to more than one person, place, or thing. Take a look at the following examples:

1. Mary told her sister that her car had been stolen. (Whose car was stolen? Mary's, or the sister's?)

2. Although Jack took Tom to the races, he didn't want to bet. (Who did not want to bet? Jack or Tom?)

Implied Pronoun Reference

In implied reference, no antecedent is expressed. (An antecedent designates the word for which the pronoun stands.)

Example : They make many poor movies in Hollywood.

In the above example, there is no noun for which the pronoun “they” refers. Here are other examples of implied pronoun reference:

1. They have reference books in the library.

2. In the high school, they decided to conduct an experiment and put the boys and girls in separate classes.

3. In some high schools, they force the students to do their homework.

Broad Pronoun Reference

In broad reference, the antecedent is a broad idea or concept rather than a specific noun or verb.

Example : Working during the day and going to school at night are difficult for most students, but this strengthens the will and often leads to outstanding success in later life.

In the sentence above, precisely what does “this” mean? The term could refer to many things—from working during the day, to difficult for students.

**Pronoun Reference/Agreement Grammar Module Activities**

5 pages long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

Instructions: Read the Guidelines Sheet for Pronoun Reference/Agreement before you complete the following activities. The Extended Learning Center provides all the videos and books you will need to complete these activities.

Tutoring: You may see a tutor for help with understanding any of the following activities.

Activities:

1. The Allyn and Bacon Video Grammar Library , Lesson 4: Pronoun Reference: Watch the video and write a ½ page summary of what you have learned.

2. SkillsBank: To enter the computer program at Lone Star College–Tomball, click the SkillsBank Icon. At Lone Star College–Willow Chase Center, click the “Start” button in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen. Select “Learning Assistance” and then “SkillsBank.” Log in to SkillsBank with your assigned user name and identification number. In SkillsBank, select “Writing” from the column of subjects on the left of the screen and then “Clear Writing & Paragraphs” from the list of lesson topics across the top.

Do Lesson 3 (“Unclear Pronoun Reference”)

After you've completed those lessons, select “Language” from the list of subjects. Choose “Grammar & Usage” from the list of lesson topics.

Do Lesson 19 (“Pronoun and Antecedent Agreement”)

Your scores will automatically be reported to your instructor, so you will not need to print out a record of your activities.

Grammar textbook work: Do not write in the textbooks. Either photocopy exercise pages from the text or complete assignments on your own paper (writing short answers whenever possible, rather than copying entire sentences).

3. The Little, Brown Handbook (8 th edition) : Read Chapter 19 (pages 381-388) and complete Exercise 2 on page 387. Read Section 15b (pages 341-346) and complete exercise 2 on page 346.

4. Odyssey (3 rd edition) : Read Chapter 26 (pages 404-425), beginning with “Maintaining Agreement in Number” and complete Exercises 26.6, 26.10, and 26.15 on pages 408-420).

5. Writer's Choice : Read pages 632-636 and complete exercises 14 and 16 for practice on pronoun agreement. Read pages 637-641 and complete exercises 17, 18, and 21 for practice on pronoun reference.

6. Worksheets: Complete Worksheets C51, C53, and C56, (the next pages in this document). Use the answer keys, located in the Extended Learning Center, to check your work.

**PRONOUN REFERENCE PRACTICE TEST**

(2 pages, 10 cents/page for printing in the ELC)

PART I: In the following sentences, determine if there is an error in pronoun reference. Mark your answers as follows:

“a” if the sentence does not contain an error in pronoun reference

“b” if the sentence does contain an error in pronoun reference

1. The family drove to the ballpark in its five cars and met in the stands just as the game was starting.

2. Both the dean and my advisor have offered their help.

3. Janet works at the cosmetics counter; they are expensive

4. Daniel Boone was born in Pennsylvania in 1734, but as a youngster he moved to the North Carolina frontier with his family.

5. When Denise read her report to Anna, she seemed very interested.

6. When we arrived in Mombasa, they described the port city's long history.

7. Each of the villagers gave his or her opinion to the lord of the estate.

8. Either Chris or Tommy will read their report out loud to the class.

9. Anybody wanting to wear a cap and gown at graduation must have his or hir measurements taken.

10. The first stunt performers were most likely the Roman gladiators, trained to entertain the crowds with their great skill in chariot driving and sword play.

PART II: Read the following passage as you would an essay, where all the sentences relate to each other. In other words, the pronoun in one numbered part might be referring to an antecedent in the previous numbered part. Mark answers as follows:

“a” if the sentence does not contain an error in pronoun reference

“b” if the sentence does contain an error in pronoun reference

(11) The merchants and artisans of Peru made both war and peace possible with the iron, tools, cloth, and other Spanish goods they supplied. (12) Because of them, the Peruvian civil wars and the Peruvian cities were good imitations of the Spanish originals. (13) Merchants were a useful, educated class of people, and their communications networks served the whole Spanish populace. (14) Unfortunately, most of them were as rootless as gypsies, traveling constantly and avoiding permanent investments. (15) Artisans tended to stay in one place and became a permanent part of their communities. (16) If he at all prospered, artisans would buy black and Indian slaves in order to increase his productivity. (17) As a result of this massive buying, artisans were, as a group, among the largest holders of slaves in Peru; it was second only to the nobility. (18) It appears that artisans bought the raw materials of their trade, whether iron, cloth, leather, or sugar, from merchants; they often extended credit. (19) This way of doing business could bring quick ruin to an artisan if he did not do well, for he started out with a heavy load of debts. (20) Because of this system of credit, many artisans failed and had to move back to Spain; he returned in humiliation.

( Part II adapted from Spanish Peru. Second Edition. James Lockhart. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968)

ANSWERS

PART I

1. B

2. A

3. B

4. A

5. B

6. B

7. A

8. B

9. A

10. A

PART II

11. A

12. B

13. A

14. A

15. A

16. B

17. B

18. B

19. A

20. B