**Pronoun Reference**

* **Your Diagnosis.** You have a **pronoun reference error**. This occurs when a **pronoun** refers to two possible **antecedents,** refers to a **broad statement or idea**, or when we reference people using ***this, that, or which***.
* **Your Treatment Plan**.
* Sometimes the **antecedent** is not clear. This is called a **vague pronoun reference**. For example: When Gloria set the pitcher on the glass table, **it** broke. As you can see, it is unclear whether “it” refers to the glass table or the pitcher. **In these cases, rewording is necessary like this:** **The pitcher broke** when Gloria set it on the glass table.
* Sometimes we try to use a **pronoun** to refer to an **entire sentence**. **For example:** Pharmaceutical companies advertise online. **This** causes patients to request drugs they may not need.  **Every pronoun must have an antecedent**, so to fix this, we will add one: **This advertising** causes patients to request drugs they don’t need.
* Finally, you cannot use *this, that,* or *which* to reference people.
* **The Cure!** If you are unsure about how to identify **pronouns** and their **antecedents**, please view this [**Pronouns PowerPoint**](https://pensacolastate.instructure.com/courses/1325752/files/50424742?module_item_id=12427624) from our [**Resources**](https://pensacolastate.instructure.com/courses/1325752/files/50424742?module_item_id=12427624) page before you continue. **The best cure for a vague pronoun reference is careful proofreading.** It’s also important to remember that grammar checkers will not identify these for you. It takes a human eye! To identify this problem, you’ll have to identify the pronoun first and then its antecedents to check for clarity.

cartoon-eyes[1] **Be on the lookout for…**

**Ambiguous or remote pronoun reference:**

* + **AMBIGUOUS**: After the children wrapped the gifts, Aunt Edna sent **them** off.
    - *Sent who off? The children or the gifts?*
  + **REVISED**: Aunt Edna sent off the gifts after the children wrapped them.

**Broad references using *this, that, which,* and *it:***

* + **BROAD**: The growth of mold can cause serious illness. **It** has even been linked to cancer.
    - *Does “it” have an antecedent?* **Every pronoun must have an antecedent.**
  + **REVISED**: The growth of mold can cause serious illness. **This growth** has even been linked to cancer.

**References to people using *which* or *that*:**

* + **EXAMPLE**: At cemeteries, we visit loved ones **that** have died.
    - *Can I use “that” to refer to a person?*
  + **REVISED**: At cemeteries, we visit loved ones **who** have died.

**Try it out! Complete the practice exercises on the OTHER SIDE of this page.** 🡪

**Revise each sentence to provide a clear pronoun reference. Some sentences may require rewording and some may require you to add an antecedent.**

1. They say that engineering students should have hands on experience.

(Who says?)

1. Marianne told Jenny that she was worried about her mother’s illness.

(Is Marianne worried about her mother or Jenny’s mother?)

1. Our German group is made up of four people, two of which I have never met before.
2. Parent involvement is high at Pensacola High School. They have created many committees.
3. Romeo and Juliet were too young, and that accounts for their rash actions.