

## FAULTY PRONOUN REFERENCE

Faulty pronoun reference occurs when the reader cannot tell to which antecedent the pronoun in a sentence is referring. The reference must be clear, not ambiguous. Study the following examples:

Ambiguous: Jerry and Owen are brothers, but he has always been taller. (Who is “he”?)

Clear: Jerry and Owen are brothers, but Owen has always been taller.

Jerry and Owen are brothers, but the latter has always been taller.

Jerry and Owen are brothers, but the former has always been taller.

Ambiguous: She enjoys oranges, bananas, and grapes, but they are her favorite. (Which ones?)

Clear: She enjoys oranges, bananas, and grapes, but oranges are her favorite.

Ambiguous: Mr. Jones told Billy that he needed to study. (Which person needed to study?)

Clear: Mr. Jones told Billy, “You need to study.”

Mr. Jones told Billy, “I need to study.”

Ambiguous: When Jim’s son was a year old, he decided to get married again. (Who is getting married?)

Clear: Jim decided to get married again when his son was a year old.

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Directions: Place a check by the clear sentence(s) in each group.

1a. \_\_\_ Many students like both math and English, but it has always been my favorite.

1b. \_\_\_ Many students like both math and English, but math has always been my favorite.

2a. \_\_\_ Max said to his brother, “ You should see your doctor.”

2b. \_\_\_ Max thought that his brother should see his doctor.

3a. \_\_\_ After Smith had fought Jones, he ran around the ring and shouted for joy.

3b. \_\_\_ Jones ran around the ring and shouted for joy after he had fought Smith.

3c. \_\_\_ After Smith had fought Jones, Smith ran around the ring and shouted for joy.

4a. \_\_\_ Ann told Lila that she hated her new hair style.

4b. \_\_\_ Ann told Lila that she hated Lila’s new hair style.

4c. \_\_\_ Ann told Lila, “I hate your new hair style.”

5a. \_\_\_ Sandy and Jane are good athletes, but she is a better student.

5b. \_\_\_ Sandy and Jane are good athletes, but the latter is a better student.

5c. \_\_\_ Sandy and Jane are good athletes, but the former is a better student.

6a. \_\_\_ Although I enjoyed chemistry and biology, I never fully understood them.

6b. \_\_\_ Although I enjoyed chemistry and biology, I never fully understood biology.

6c. \_\_\_ Although I enjoyed chemistry and biology, I never fully understood it.

6d. \_\_\_ Although I enjoyed chemistry and biology, I never fully understood the latter.

Directions: Revise each of the following sentences.

8. Bill told his dad that he needed to lose some weight.
9. After the coach had hollered at Morton, he felt terrible.
10. When I parked my car next to the bus, I noticed that it had a flat tire.
11. He removed the stone from the cloth and washed it carefully.
12. When I tried to remove the dog's dish, it bit me.
13. The candidate informed his aide that he was leaving on the next plane.
14. He bought a new car with an AM-FM radio, but it was in poor condition.
15. Jane thought that Kathy ought to consult her doctor.
16. When the eggs were served to the customers, they often looked green.
17. Elaine had to stay home with her little sister because she had been naughty.
18. Before the tourists mingle with the natives, they should be inoculated.
19. Sam told his brother that he couldn't go to the game.
20. I dropped the glass on my foot and broke it.