

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.

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.