Pronouns

PRONOUNS are words that substitute for nouns, as in the example below: he, it, he.

ANTECEDENTS are the noun to which the pronouns are referring, as in the example below: Andrew, ball.

After Andrew intercepted the ball, he kicked it as hard as he could.

COMMON MISTAKES:

• Problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement (singular vs. plural).

  INCORRECT: When someone has been drinking, they are likely to speed.

  (Someone implies singular, while they are implies plural).

  CORRECT: When drivers have been drinking, they are likely to speed.

  CORRECT: When someone has been drinking, he or she is likely to speed.

  CORRECT: A driver who has been drinking is likely to speed.

• Problems with pronoun reference (clarity).

  INCORRECT: When Gloria set the pitcher on the glass-topped table, it broke. (There are 2 possible antecedents to go along with the pronoun, causing confusion.

  CORRECT: The pitcher broke when Gloria set it on the glass-topped table.

  INCORRECT: After braiding Ann’s hair, Sue decorated them with ribbons. (The pronoun is referring to an antecedent that does not exist in the sentence).
CORRECT: After braiding Ann’s hair, Sue decorated the braids with ribbons.

- Problems with pronoun case (person pronouns such as I vs. me, she vs. her).

  INCORRECT: During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that the kidnapper was him. (Him implies an objective case when a subjective case is called-for).

  CORRECT: During the Lindbergh trial Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that the kidnapper was he.

  CORRECT: During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that he was the kidnapper.

- Problems with pronoun case (who vs. whom)

  INCORRECT: The prize goes to the runner whom collects the most points. (Whom implies objective-case, when the subjective-case is called for).

  CORRECT: The prize goes to the runner who collects the most points.

  INCORRECT: You will work with our senior engineers, who you will meet later. (Who implies subjective-case when the objective-case is called for).

  CORRECT: You will work with our senior engineers, whom you will meet later.