

# Avoiding Vague and Ambiguous Pronoun References

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## VOCABULARY

### Antecedent

*The noun which a pronoun substitutes for or refers to.*

### Ambiguous Pronoun Reference

*A pronoun with multiple, possible antecedents.*

### Vague Pronoun Reference

*A pronoun without a specific antecedent.*

## THE RULE

A pronoun must refer to a single noun, which acts as its antecedent.

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## PRACTICE *Fixing Ambiguous Pronoun References*

**Error:** When Samuel dropped the goblet onto the glass table, **it** broke. (*What broke? The table or the goblet?*)

**Correction:** The **goblet** broke when Samuel dropped **it** onto the glass table.

**Error:** Amy had an internship at Dell last summer; **this** will become her career. (*What does "this" refer to?*)

**Correction:** Amy had an internship at Dell last summer; **this work** will become her career.

## PRACTICE *Fixing Vague Pronoun References*

**Error:** **They** should increase funding to academic programs. (*Who is "they"?*)

**Correction:** **The administration** should increase funding to academic programs.

**Error:** Sleeping eight hours a night is vital to the health of students, yet research clearly shows they simply don't do **it**. (*What is the antecedent of "it"?*)

**Correction:** Although sleeping eight hours a night is vital to the health of students, research clearly shows they simply don't sleep that much.