

Identifying Vague Pronouns

A **pronoun** takes the place of a noun in a sentence. That noun is called an **antecedent**. A pronoun is **vague** if you can't tell what the antecedent should be. For example, the pronoun could refer to more than one possible noun in the sentence. To keep your writing clear, you should avoid using vague pronouns.

Example:

Emily uses vibrant **colors** to paint mountain **landscapes**, and **they** are beautiful.

The pronoun **they** is vague. It could refer to "colors" or "landscapes". Here are two ways to rewrite the sentence to avoid the vague pronoun:

Emily uses vibrant colors to paint mountain landscapes. Her paintings are beautiful.

OR

The vibrant colors in Emily's mountain landscape paintings are beautiful.



Directions: The following sentences each have a **vague pronoun** in bold. Circle the possible antecedents for each vague pronoun, and then rewrite the text to fix the error. There are multiple ways to correctly fix each sentence.

Student answers may vary.

1. When you are done using the **volleyball equipment** in the **gym** could you lock **it** up?

When you are done using the volleyball equipment, could you lock it up in the gym?

2. **Olivia** and her cousin **Leah** go to the same university, but **she** is graduating in May.

Olivia goes to the same university as her cousin Leah, who is graduating in May.

3. **Aiden** took his **golden retriever, Max** to the park. **He** ran over to the empty bench as soon as they arrived.

Aiden took his golden retriever, Max, to the park. The dog ran over to the empty bench as soon as they arrived.

4. The violinist removed his **instrument** from the **case** and placed **it** on the seat beside him.

The violinist removed his instrument from the case, and then placed the case on the seat beside him.

5. After the **neighbors** give you their **donations** can you bring **them** to the thrift store?

After the neighbors give you their donations, can you bring the donated items to the thrift store?

6. Planting certain **herbs** near **vegetables** can ensure that **they** aren't devoured by pests.

Planting certain herbs near vegetables can ensure that the vegetables aren't devoured by pests.

7. **James** gave **Jackson** a signed first edition of **his** favorite comic book.

James gave Jackson a signed first edition of Jackson's favorite comic book.

8. Separate the **yolks** from the **egg whites** and then place **them** in the mixing bowl.

Separate the yolks from the egg whites, and then place the egg whites in the mixing bowl.