
N

?

N

Pronouns, words that rename nouns and noun phrases, can connect one sentence to the next to guide the reader through a paragraph. Pronouns are useful in several ways, but writers must know how to use pronouns appropriately to avoid confusion and ensure coherence. This handout outlines how to use pronouns to write a cohesive paragraph.

Pronouns are u

Pronouns help **writers avoid repeating a noun monotonously**. Pronouns can be used to replace nouns that have previously been mentioned once or several times. Thus, pronouns help writers reduce wordiness.

Pronouns help **readers track essential sentence elements**. If readers have verbal cues to follow pronouns and transitions they can forge connections between information in the paragraph to trace a unified sequence of ideas.

Harry had the best morning Harry had in a long time. Harry was careful to walk a little way apart from the Dursleys so that Dudley and Piers, [as] Dudley and Piers were starting to get hitting Harry. Harry and the Dursleys ate in the zoo restaurant, and when Dudley had a tantrum bought Dudley another knickerbocker glory and Harry was allowed to finish the first. Harry felt, afterward, that Harry should have known the joy was all too good to last. After lunch Harry and the Dursleys went to the reptile house. The reptile house was cool and dark, with lit windows all along the walls. Behind the glass, all sorts of lizards and snakes were crawling and slithering over bits of wood and stone. Dudley and Piers wanted to see huge, poisonous cobras and thick, man-crushing pythons. Dudley quickly found the largest snake in the place. The largest snake in crushed the car into a trash can

The problem in this paragraph is that *no pronouns are used*. A paragraph that does not use any pronouns can be exhausting for the reader because it is excessively wordy, especially since long noun phrases are repeatedly used (e.g.,

Pronouns can be difficult to use correctly. Readers must be able to infer the connection between the pronoun and the noun that the pronoun replaces. When using pronouns in your writing, keep
o.

How many are we talking about? So that readers envision the same number consistently, be sure that your noun and pronoun agree in number. Singular pronouns must be used to replace singular nouns, and plural pronouns must be used to replace plural nouns. For example, if you were to replace

Read the following example	e sentence?
<i>A batter runs the bases once they hit the ball.</i>	
In this sentence, the reader is not sure how many batters are being referred to because the singular noun batter	This sentence can be
rewritten in one of the following ways:	
<i>A batter runs the bases once he hits the ball.</i> <i>Batters run the bases once they hit the ball.</i>	

Are we talking about a person or a thing? Determine if you want your reader to imagine a person or thing. A common error that writers make is to refer to a person by
hat, pronouns that refer to objects. To refer to a person, use the pronouns
whom.

to whom or to what the pronouns are referring _____, _____? The writer needs to name people, places, and things before replacing nouns and noun phrases with pronouns in subsequent sentences.

Also, *some pronouns do not match in number* with the nouns they are replacing. For example, in the first sentence of the above paragraph, the opening subject _____, and the subsequent subject _____ plural. _____ It is Harry in both cases who is

Another problem here is that pronouns used to describe *people* are describing *objects* and vice versa. For example, _____ because the sentence refers to people _____ The next sample paragraph will illuminate the pronoun puzzle that no doubt confused you in the previous paragraph.

When using pronouns in a paragraph, the writer needs to make sure it is clear who or what the pronouns are referring to; a paragraph will not be cohesive if pronouns are improperly used. The following paragraph is the actual passage from *Jctt{ "Rqwtg"cpf"vjg"Uqtegtgtøu"Uvqpg*, by J.K. Rowling. How effective is the use of pronouns to control cohesion in the paragraph?

from the Dursleys so that Dudley and Piers, who were starting to get bored with the animals by _____ im. They ate in the zoo

ice cream on top, Uncle Vernon bought him another one and Harry was allowed to finish the first. Harry felt, afterward, that he should have known it was all too good to last. After lunch they went to the reptile house. It was cool and dark in there, with lit windows all along the walls. Behind the glass, all sorts of lizards and snakes were crawling and slithering over bits of wood and stone. Dudley and Piers wanted to see huge, poisonous cobras and thick, man-crushing pythons. Dudley quickly found the largest snake in the place. It could have wrapped its body _____ but at the moment

There are several reasons why this paragraph is cohesive and easy for the reader to comprehend:

There is a **mix** of nouns and pronouns.

All nouns and noun phrases **are identified** before pronouns are used to replace them.

Pronouns correctly refer to **people** or **objects**.

Pronouns **match in number** with the nouns they are replacing.

circulation seven times in seventeen months, and he only got fired twice in the process. After his second termination, Poe took a series of editorial positions at the leading magazines in Philadelphia and New York and supplemented his income with lectures and public readings. His short story The Gold Bug was a smash hit, but the publication of The Raven made him internationally famous (while only earning him about \$15).

Answer Key for Activity 2

her dry, shriveled hands over the glass ball that she had bought at a dollar store a long time ago. She could hear the laughter and the occasional shouts of the children as they ran outside from ride to ride and from tent to tent. They never came in to see her. Instead it was always the face of a laid-off dock worker or a romantic teenager who peered through the entrance way of her tent. The unemployed dock workers wanted to hear about winning lottery tickets and new job opportunities. The teenagers were eager to hear stories about far-away places and dark, mysterious strangers. And so the fortune teller always told them what they wanted to hear. She liked giving them something to dream about. She tried to fill their minds with great expectations. Just then, a young man appeared in the entrance way. He was nervous, and his smile was timid. He shuffled into the dark tent, his head full of dreams and yet, at the same time, innocently empty. The fortune teller took his trembling hands into her own hands and peered at the revealing lines etched onnL0] TJst(A.[twn)-(7ha)4(nds a)nd pe)8.N4.04 0.59998 ref92.3mt \$15).