

English Week 7 (Sept. 17-20) Notes and Assignments

Again this week, we are going to work on pronouns and their overuse in writing. For some reason, a lot of you like to use pronouns instead of a direct reference which means the writing becomes boring and vague. This is where a casual language writing style would be. More direct references fall under the formal category which is what you need to do for journaling at this level. In order to make sure the reader, or audience, knows what you wish to convey, you need to be specific with your words and phrases. I will not always be the reader (audience). If I'm not that person, then your message may not be delivered with the intent you wanted. Formal writing will be the primary writing style until you graduate. This will help prepare you for college or work. The goal for high school English is to prepare you for life beyond high school.

I also think that over time, for whatever reason, the definitions of noun and pronoun have been forgotten. Once you learn the terminology in elementary, teachers use the words noun and pronoun under the assumption that you know the meanings of these words. We don't clarify your comprehension of the terms each year. I'm not in any way pointing fingers at any group or person. I myself started the pronoun assignment with the assumption that you understood the difference in the terms and how to properly reference a noun to a pronoun for clarity. For the next week or so, we will go back to the basics including definitions and examples to help you better understand what is expected in your writing.

Definitions

Noun- a person, place, thing or idea (the basic definition from elementary language arts)

Advanced definition for high school- Any member of a class of words that can function as the main or only elements of subjects of verbs (a *dog* just barked), or of objects of verbs or preposition (to send *money* from *home*), and that in English can take plural forms and possessive endings (Three of his *buddies* want to borrow *John's* laptop). Nouns are often described as referring to persons, places, things, states, or qualities.

Also- The condition of being definite, distinct or clearly outline

Pronoun- replaces a person, place, thing, or idea (basic definition used in elementary)

Advanced definition for high school- Any member of a small class of words found in many languages that are used as replacements or substitutes for nouns and noun phrases, and that a very general reference

EXAMPLES: I, you, he, she, him, her, this, it, who, what, our, my, me, we, etc.

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WOW!!!! The advanced definitions are really confusing. Much like your writing when you don't reference properly and use nothing but pronouns.

So let's simplify the difference between a noun and pronoun for what you need to do in your writing for my classes. A noun is the direct reference to something or someone. For example, the direct reference for me is Lisa Lee, Mrs. Lee, and English teacher. It is my name and/or profession. The pronoun for the name can be she, her, me, you, etc. While my name gives the audience a mental picture of who you are talking about, the pronoun really does not. This is especially true if the audience is not very familiar with who I actually am. You can write a paragraph or even say: Her assignments are so hard, and I don't understand what she wants.

Great sentence if you are talking to the person sitting in a desk beside you **in my actual class**. Obviously if you are in my class, the audience (student) would most likely know exactly who you are speaking about. I say most likely because understanding also depends on what other information is found in the words and phrases before and after the statement about the teacher.

What happens, though, if you leave my class and go to history class? I use this example because at this point in time, I have never met your history teacher. I don't know what she looks like or sounds like. If Mrs. Trudo overheard that statement, not knowing what class you had just been in, she might think you were talking about her. What if you said, Mrs. Lee's class is so hard. Wow. Again, we have a dilemma. Mrs. Trudo then has to decide which Mrs. Lee. We have two in the school now. If you as the writer/speaker say: Mrs. Lee is giving me writing assignments that I don't understand, and she is being unreasonable this year. BOOM!!!! Definite and distinct information that helps Mrs. Trudo know which teacher and class you are worried about.

While this example is wordy, I hope it helps you understand how being distinct helps with understanding and comprehension. You have to write like you never know who the audience is. If you use a pronoun like I did, you have to have a direct reference before that for clarity. You have to be very distinct and literal in what you write and want to portray to the audience. I don't just need nouns, I need noun phrases and clarifying references for everything you say. This is why I often give you the number of sentences needed for any assignment. If you are vague, you can answer a question with 1-2 sentences, but it is not answered thoroughly with distinct, clarifying statements. In order to be clear and on point, you need to write 7-20 sentences at any given time to ensure that your message is understandable and delivered with the proper intent. This is also why I do not like you to use got for every verb. Using well thought out action verbs for a specific situation helps with this clarity and comprehension. You establish validity in your writing using less pronouns and better verbs.

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Sample of Student Writing- Before/After Editing

The pound takes out **their** catching supplies, and try and capture Makayla. Sam was trying to tell the people who captured **her** to let **her** go. **They** never listened to **her**, and was asking **her** if the dog bit **her**, and if **she** is ok or injured. Sam said **she** was fine until **they** took the dog.

So 4 decently written sentences with details. However, in those 4 sentences, there are 10 pronouns. This assignment was the one where you were to avoid pronouns for the most part. Yes, these are referenced to some degree, but not often enough to ensure clarity and keep the reader's interest.

This is the same paragraph, but the pronouns are removed and a number put into place so you can make the connections and references as we edit.

The pound takes out **(1)** catching supplies, and try and capture Makayla. Sam was trying to tell the people who captured **(2)** to let **(3)** go. **(4)** never listened to **(5)**, and was asking **(6)** if the dog bit **(7)**, and if **(8)** is ok or injured. Sam said **(9)** was fine until **(10)** took the dog.

These are the reference nouns:

Pound

Sam

Makayla/dog

Next are the numbers and who they should reference

1. Pound
2. Makayla/dog
3. Makayla/dog
4. Pound
5. Sam
6. Sam
7. Sam
8. Sam
9. Sam
10. Pound

The referencing nouns are only used 4 times while the paragraph contains 10 pronouns. In formal writing, the referencing nouns should be 10 while the pronouns should be 4. With the formal writing criteria, each sentence should have the referencing noun followed with a pronoun. If the sentence has multiple referrals, then it should have 2-3 referencing nouns with only 1-2 pronouns. I know that constantly using the nouns seems redundant, but in the overall writing process, you never assume the audience is

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following your ideas or train of thought. Some literal readers may take things just like that, LITERAL. Everything needs to be specific. Maybe their mind wanders off due to stress or ADD. You need to reference often to keep them pulled back onto topic. As the writer, you have no idea what audience you are facing. This is the same for speeches. You have no idea what is going on with an audience member at any given point in your story. You as the writer/speaker have to control the process for clarity and comprehension.

When I give notes in class, I often repeat the topic in order to refocus students for clarity and even then, I have students who miss important information and instructions.

This first edit will contain no pronouns so you can see how the occasional pronoun is helpful to avoid redundancy or circling logic. In this case the phrasing was changed to help create a smoother writing pattern.

The pound takes out **the** catching supplies, and try and capture Makayla. Sam was trying to tell the people who captured **the dog** to let **Makayla** go. **The pound** never listened to **Sam**, and was asking **Sam if the dog was biting**, and if **Sam** is ok or injured. Sam (**deleted words**) was fine until **the pound** took the dog.

The green highlights are where the words and phrases were completely changed to help with the rhythm and flow of the sentence. It creates a less awkward writing style. However, the section where "Sam" is repeated multiple times in a row does make the piece seem awkward and redundant. It circles endlessly around the same phrasing.

This next selection has the pronoun after the referencing noun and will also have some phrasing changed to avoid awkwardness with the writing patterns

The pound takes out **their** catching supplies, and try and capture Makayla. Sam was trying to tell the people who captured **Makayla** to let **her** go. **The pound** never listened to **Sam**. **Sam kept being** ask if the **dog had bitten her** **The pound ask Sam** if **she** is ok or injured. Sam said **she** was fine until **the pound** took the dog.

If you notice, the sentences are changed to be shorter sentences in order to accommodate the referencing noun and pronoun in each sentence. The green highlights show where the phrasing had to be changed in order to make the noun/pronoun relationship valid. The yellow highlights are where the noun was inserted for the pronoun the way it should have been originally written.

The writing style for formal writing will seem awkward for a while, but you will eventually get used to it. With that said, you will have 2 written assignments this week focusing on

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pronouns and nouns. Please read all instructions completely before you begin in order to understand exactly what is being ask of you.

Also, some of you seem to have some strange ideas about how to get your grades from the packets. In order to actually get the grade, ***you have to do the work!!***

A couple of you print the packet each week and put your name on the top of it. You turn it in with no attached work. Putting your name on the top of the packet is not getting you grades. You have to do the written work for each day. To date, you have had 1 assignment per day. For those of you signing the packet and doing nothing else, you have acquired a lot of zeros up to this point.

I have also been very clear in my instructions for due dates and turning work in on time. I do work with the student who maybe had an emergency such as a sick relative or something but unless you communicate with me, this courtesy is not extended because you suddenly go online and see 24 zeros in the gradebook. As a general rule, I will not grade your missing work when you suddenly decide to send in all of September's assignments because you all of sudden realized you will fail the nine weeks. I only mention this because we are nearing the end of the first grading period. Several of you may need to contact me quickly to figure out how to get your grades up. Those of you who are athletes know what I mean. Waiting until the last minute of the 9 weeks to suddenly get serious about your eligibility doesn't work with me. I won't take three weeks of work because you knew you had to do it but you were working, had boyfriend issues, or went out of town. You take care of business when you are supposed to, or take advantage of make-up days when and/or if they are given.

With that said, this is your lucky week for make-up work. Look at the assignments and follow your instructions this week. It can be a great time to work on your writing skills and communicate with me on how to improve your overall grade for my class in the future.

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Monday's Assignment- September 21, 2020

This is your very lucky week. Woo Hoo!!! You get the chance to recover your grades. You have to contact me though. I will not be calling you, and **you cannot have another teacher call me for your work.** You can, however, contact me about your missing assignments and for this effort you get a 100 for today. This my friends is an extra credit, bonus grade. You will not be penalized for no contact. Don't panic thinking you will receive a zero because you won't. You will either get a 100 or it will be a blank. Touch base with me about redoing a grade you are unhappy with, just contact me. You can work on your missing assignments all week and turn them in Thursday by 4:00 and I will accept it. This is for all classes. Please take advantage of it.

Tuesday's Assignment- September 22, 2020

You will need to write a journal of 10-12 sentences on any subject you choose. This assignment will, unfortunately, be quite challenging. **You will use absolutely no pronouns.** You will refer to yourself as the writer or give yourself a name and write in third person or whatever you need to do to have a well written story with a narrator and third person orientation.

Your grade will revolve around number of sentences. Every sentence under 10 is worth 5 points. Any error for spelling, punctuation, etc. is worth ½ point. Each pronoun used is worth 3 points. You need to be very careful with this because the use of very many pronouns and your grade is tanked. *****REMEMBER THE PRONOUN REPLACES THE NOUN***** The pronoun is vague. You have to use nouns and be very literal and distinct in your writing.

Wednesday's Assignment-September 23, 2020

Again, this will be a journal story of your choice. It will also need to be 10-12 sentences. Unlike previous assignments, you can have minimal pronouns. Each pronoun must be tied directly to its correlating noun. So if you have a pronoun, you must first have the noun for clarity. You cannot have 3 pronouns tied to the noun. Make a new sentence. Third person writing style would probably be best on this one also. Third person is the way many of your novels are written. They contain a narrator and you as the writer are not a direct part of the story unless you are the narrator. Then, you need to be very creative with your writing.

Your grade will revolve around number of sentences. Every sentence under 10 is worth 5 points. Any error for spelling, punctuation, etc. is worth ½ point. Each pronoun not tied to the noun used is worth 3 points. You need to be very careful with this as many ill-placed pronouns mean your grade is tanked. The pronoun is vague. You have to use nouns and be very literal and distinct in your writing. Final assignment in on next page!!

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Thursday's Assignment- September 25, 2020

If you are missing work, turn it in today. Use this time to catch up. There aren't very many times you are given this opportunity with your classes, so please use it wisely.

Have a great weekend. If you have any questions, contact me at lee@floydbroncos.com or via cell at 575-309-6834. You can call if you would rather since you may need help with the instructions. You can text if you choose. I don't mind talking to you if you prefer.