Pronouns, Adjectives, and Adverbs

Pronouns

Pronouns either refer to a noun or take the place of a noun. For example:

- Robert races cars.   He races cars.
- The car needs gas.   It needs gas.

It is important to use the correct pronoun so that your reader clearly understands which noun your pronoun is referring to. Therefore, pronouns should:

1. Agree in number

If the pronoun takes the place of a singular noun, you have to use a singular pronoun.

If a student parks a car on campus, he or she has to buy a parking sticker.

(INCORRECT: If a student parks a car on campus, they have to buy a parking sticker.)

2. Agree in person

If you are writing in the **first person** (I), don't confuse your reader by switching to the **second person** (you) or **third person** (he, she, they, it, etc.). Similarly, if you are using the second person, don't switch to first or third.

When a person comes to class, he or she should have his or her homework ready.

(INCORRECT: When a person comes to class, you should have your homework ready.)

3. Refer clearly to a specific noun.

Don't be vague or ambiguous.

INCORRECT: Although the motorcycle hit the tree, it was not damaged.

   (Is "it" the motorcycle or the tree?)

INCORRECT: I don't think they should show violence on TV.

   (Who are "they"?)

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/595/1/

Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns. Adjectives usually answer one of a few different questions: "What kind?" or "Which?" or "How many?" For example:

• "I ate a meal." Meal is a noun. We don't know what kind of meal; all we know is that someone ate a meal.

• "I ate an enormous meal." Meal is a noun, and enormous is an adjective that describes it. It tells us what kind of meal the person ate.

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. (You can recognize adverbs easily because many of them are formed by adding -ly to an adjective, though that is not always the case.) The most common question that adverbs answer is how.

Let's look at verbs first.

•"She sang beautifully." Beautifully is an adverb that modifies *sang*. It tells us how she sang.

•"The cellist played carelessly." Carelessly is an adverb that modifies *played*. It tells us how the cellist played.

Adverbs also modify adjectives and other adverbs.

•"That woman is extremely nice." Nice is an adjective that modifies the noun woman. Extremely is an adverb that modifies nice; it tells us how nice she is. How nice is she? She's extremely nice.

•"It was a terribly hot afternoon." Hot is an adjective that modifies the noun afternoon. Terribly is an adverb that modifies the adjective hot. How hot is it? Terribly hot.