Pronouns

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

Definitions and Examples: Pronouns are words that fill in for other nouns such as the following:

he/him/his	she/her/hers	I/me/mine	we/us/our	it/its/they/them
they/them	someone/somebody	anyone/anybody	everyone/everybody	no one/nobody

Example One: Because today is a snow day, I am sitting home working on my **computer. It** is a lot of fun.

In this example, the pronoun is "It." But what noun is "It" replacing? Is the computer itself a lot of fun? Is sitting at home and working *on* the computer a lot of fun? Or, is having a snow day a lot of fun? When dealing with pronouns, think LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION. A pronoun replaces the last noun that was mentioned that matches in terms of number and, in some cases, gender. Remember, a reader will look to *the last noun that was mentioned* to determine which noun the pronoun is replacing.

Example Two:
Physical therapists need to be very honest with their **clients. They** need to listen carefully to **their** answers.

In this instance, the pronoun "They" technically refers back to clients ("They" is a plural pronoun and immediately follows the plural noun "clients") and "their" refers back to clients (clients' answers). However, the pronouns (they/their) and what the pronouns represent (therapists/clients) get all mixed together.

Rewrite: Physical therapists need to be very honest and open with their clients. These medical professionals need to ask their patients questions and listen carefully to the answers.

Rewrite: Physical therapists need to be very honest and open with their clients, asking patients questions and listening carefully to the answers.

Example Three:
Computer engineers are faced with many challenges and **responsibilities. They** are often called upon to operate in stressful and fast-paced businesses and offices.

Again, the word "They" technically refers to the word "responsibilities." Responsibilities aren't human; they can't be "called upon" to do anything.

Rewrite: Computer engineers are faced with many challenges and responsibilities, including being called upon to operate in stressful and fast-paced businesses and offices.

Tip:
Avoid beginning any sentence with a pronoun (He, She, They, It). Begin a sentence with the *actual* person/people/objects you are talking about, and use your pronoun later in the sentence:

He is a good guy, and you would really like **Chris**. (Are "He" and "Chris" the same person?)
<div align="center">versus</div>

Chris is a good guy, and you would really like **him.** (The "him" is clear; "him" = Chris).