

Small Group Grammar Workshop

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APPENDIX: *Sample Mini-Grammar Lesson*

Topic: Pronouns

Problem 1: Unclear pronoun reference

Example: If your dog does a poo, please put it in a litter bin.

Example: Mary went running with Susan, and she beat her time by five minutes.

Rule: If there are pronouns in a sentence, the referent must be clear. Use the noun to clarify, if necessary.

Solution: If your dog does a poo, please put the poo in a litter bin.

Solution: Mary went running with Susan and beat Susan's time by two minutes.

Problem 2: Pronoun does not agree with the noun

Example: When a person gets a speeding ticket, you have to pay a fine.

Rule: Pronouns must agree in person and in number with their referent.

Solution: When a person gets a speeding ticket, the person has to pay a fine.

or When a person gets a speeding ticket, he or she has to pay a fine.

or When people get a speeding ticket, they have to pay a fine.

Practice: How would you correct the following sentences?

1. I like swimming because it makes you feel good.
2. Either the president or the vice-president must give their approval.*
3. Both the CD and the old cassette tape are missing its labels.
4. The committee had a hard time making their decision.

*Note that "their approval" is considered a gender-neutral singular pronoun in some style manuals. This can generate an interesting discussion for the class.