

Avoiding Ambiguity and Vagueness



which / who vs. that



- *Correct the sentences below which contain grammatical mistakes.
- S2. Correct the sentences *below, which contain grammatical mistakes.*
- S3. Correct the sentences *below that contain grammatical mistakes.*

which / who vs. that



- S4. Correct the sentences below, *all of which* contain grammatical mistakes.
- S5. Correct *only* those sentences below *that* contain grammatical mistakes.

Restrictive vs. non-restrictive



- S6. My sister, *who lives in Paris*, is a researcher.
- S7. My sister *that lives in Paris* is a researcher.

which, that and who



- *which, that* and *who* should only refer to the noun that immediately precedes them.
- *A group of patients was compiled using this procedure, as proposed by Smith and Jones [2010], *who had died under surgery*.
- A group of patients *who had died under surgery* was compiled using this procedure, as proposed by Smith and Jones [2010].

which, that and who



- Each scheduling service is characterized by a mandatory set of QoS parameters, as reported in Table 1, *which describes the guarantees of the applications.*
- Each scheduling service is characterized by a mandatory *set of QoS parameters, as reported in Table 1. This set describes the guarantees of the applications.*

-ing form vs. that



- S1. Those students *wishing to participate in the call for papers* should contact ...
- S2. The professor *giving the keynote speech at the conference* is from Togo.
- S3. * Professor Rossi teaches the students *having a good level of English*.

-ing form vs. that



- S4. Professor Rossi teaches the students *that have a good level of English*.
- S5. Professor Rossi teaches the students *since he has a good level of English*.

- *ing form vs. subject + verb (active)*



- S1. * If you take your young daughter in the car, don't let her put her head out of the window *while driving*.
- S3. If you take your young daughter in the car, don't let her put her head out of the window *while you are driving*.

- *ing form vs. subject + verb (active)*



- S2. * After consuming twenty bottles of lemonade, *the conference chair* presented the awards to *the fifty best PhD students*.
- S4. After *the fifty best PhD students* had consumed twenty bottles of lemonade, the conference chair presented them with the awards.

- ing form vs. subject + verb (active)



- S8. *By sitting and watching too much television, our muscles become weaker.
- S9. When **we sit and watch** too much television, our muscles become weaker.

- *ing form with by and thus*



- * This will improve performance *keeping clients satisfied.*
- (a) the way to improve performance is **if clients are kept satisfied?**
- or (b) as a consequence of improving performance **clients will be satisfied?**

- *ing form with by and thus*



- S2. This will improve performance ***thus*** keeping clients satisfied.
- S3. This will improve performance ***by*** keeping clients satisfied.
- S4. This will improve performance **and** clients will (*thus*) be satisfied.

- *ing form vs. infinitive*



Note the difference between these four sentences.

- *To burn CDs, you just need some software.*
- *Burning CDs now takes only a few seconds.*
- *To burn CDs takes only a few seconds.*
- *By burning CDs, we deprive artists of royalties.*

articles



- *The ambiguity is one characteristic of English language.

articles



- (1) General (no article) vs. specific (article must be used)
- (2) A / An (indefinite article) vs. one (number)
- (3) Languages

the general versus specific rule



- *S3. A researcher spends many days in the lab.*
- *S4. Researchers spend many days in the lab.*
- *S5. The researcher spends many days in the lab.*
- *S6. The researchers spend many days in the lab.*

a versus one rule



- S7. We made *one* experiment before the equipment exploded.
- S8. We made *an* experiment before the equipment exploded.

Uncountable nouns



- * *an information, these informations*
- * *Evidences*
- *Spinach leaves are ...vs. This spinach tastes.....*
- *Cars vs. traffic*
- *Steps forward vs. progress*
- *Comments vs. feedback*

- when an uncountable noun is referred to in a later phrase with a plural pronoun (*they, these, those*) or adjective (*many, few*), it can create confusion for readers.

Uncountable nouns



- * Such *feedbacks are* vital when analyzing the queries. At subsequent stages in the procedure, for instance after steps 3 and 4, **they** are also useful for assessing ...
- Such *feedback is* vital when ... At subsequent stages **it** is also useful for ...

Uncountable nouns



- * Such *feedbacks are* vital when analyzing the queries. At subsequent stages in the procedure, for instance after steps 3 and 4, ***many of them*** are also useful for assessing ...
- Such *feedback is* vital when ... At subsequent stages ***much of it*** is also useful for ...

Pronouns



- *I put the book in the car and then I left *it* there all day.
- *It: the book*
- *It: the car*

Series of items



- * We could go to Australia, Canada or the Netherlands, *but they* are a long way from here.
- S4.Australia, Canada or the Netherlands, *all of which* are a long way from here.
- S5.Australia, Canada or the Netherlands. *But Canada and the Netherlands* are a long way from here.
- S6.Australia, Canada or the Netherlands. *But the Netherlands* are a long way from here.

this



- * There are two ways to learn a language: take private lessons or learn it in the country where the language is spoken but *this* entails spending a lot of money.
- S12. There are two ways to learn a language: take private lessons or learn it in the country where the language is spoken. However, *living in a foreign country* entails spending a lot of money.
- S13. There are two ways to learn a language: take private lessons or learn it in the country where the language is spoken. However, *both these solutions* entail spending a lot of money.

them



- * We cut the trees into sectors, then separated the logs from the branches, and then burnt *them*.
- you just need to replace *them* with *branches* (if it is just the branches that were burnt), or with *both of them* (if both branches and logs were burnt).

Referring backwards: *the former, the latter*



- * Africa has a greater population than the combined populations of Russia, Canada and the United States. In ***the latter*** the population is only ...
- Africa has a greater population than the combined populations of Russia, Canada and the United States. In ***the USA***, the population is only ...
- Africa has a greater population than the combined populations of Russia, Canada and the United States. In ***Canada and the USA***, the population is only ...

Referring backwards: *the former, the latter*



- * *Smith* was the first to introduce the concept of readability in websites. In his seminal paper, written in 1991, he realized that the way we read pages on the web is totally different from the way we read a printed document. Five years later, Jones studied the differences between the way that people of different languages, whose scripts are written left right (e.g. English), right left (e.g. Arabic) and top down (e.g. Japanese), read texts on the web. ***The former author*** then wrote another paper ...

When it is OK to use them



- Water organisms can be contaminated directly or indirectly. *The former* occurs by contact or ingestion of the substance dissolved in water, whereas *the latter* happens when the contaminant is accumulated in the food chain.

Repetition of key words



- S7. * In recent years, these skills have been applied to the study of heavy metal accumulation **and** toxicity in mammalian cells **and** the modulation of neurotransmitter-gated ion channels by metal ions in primary neuronal cultures **and** in recombinant receptors expressed in heterologous systems. **Concerning this last topic**, there has been much interest in ...
- S8. ... **and** in recombinant receptors expressed in heterologous systems. **With regard to such recombinant receptors**, there has been much interest in ...

above and below



- S1. * As mentioned *above* / *before*, these values are important when ...
- S2. * These points are dealt with in detail *below* ...

- *see Sect. 1.1 / see the above paragraph / see points 4–5 below.*

Use of *respectively* to disambiguate



- S2. *... where X is the function for Y, and f1 and f2 are the constant functions for P and Q.
- Are f1 and f2 constant functions for both P and Q? If so:
- S3. ... and f1 and f2 are the constant functions for *both P and Q*.
- Or is f1 for P and f2 for Q? If so, use *respectively*:
- S4. ... and f1 and f2 are the constant functions for P and Q, ***respectively***.

and



- * I will be free the whole of Monday *and Tuesday and Thursday morning* unless one of the professors decides to arrange an extra class.
- S2. I will be free the whole of Monday, *and (also) Tuesday and Thursday morning.*
- S3. I will be free the whole of Monday and Tuesday, *and (also) Thursday morning.*

both ... and, either ... or



- S1. We studied both English and Spanish.
- S2. You can study either English or Spanish.
- S3. You cannot study both Russian and Korean.
- S4. You cannot study either Russian or Korean.

Monologophobia - the constant search for synonyms



- * *Companies* have to pay many taxes. In fact, occasionally *enterprises* fail because of overtaxation. Some *firms* resolve this problem by moving their headquarters to countries where the tax rate is lower.
- *Companies have to pay many taxes and occasionally may fail because of over-taxation. Some [companies] resolve this problem by moving their headquarters to countries where the tax rate is lower.*

Using generic words



- *Our findings demonstrate that treatment with **chitosan** *resulted in the significant protection* of Arabidopsis leaves against the necrotrophic fungus Botrytis cinerea. This is closely related to the fact that this **compound** *is perceived by the plant as a powerful elicitor*.

Using *one*



- S5. * This can be done by using either a *chromatographic pump or a peristaltic **one***.
- This can be done by using either a *chromatographic or peristaltic pump*.

Be as precise as possible



- In a number of cases..... HOW MANY?
- *few in number**few*
- *a high percentage of*.....*many*
- *a large proportion of**many*
- *vast majority of**most*
- *never at any time*.....*never*
- *a good number of*.....*several*

Avoid these expressions



- in the short term
- in the near future
- a relatively short....
- long duration
- (quite a) high
- low number of
- recently/recent

Be as precise as possible



- S1. ***Usually** the samples were cooled to room temperature.
- S2. *It was necessary to study the problem with **attention**.
- S3. *In the late 1990s **nearly all** newspapers created a companion website.

Be as precise as possible



- S4. *Subjects performed ***fairly*** well and their results were **substantially** better than their counterparts.
- S5. * Sampling took place in a ***relatively*** short but ***significant*** period of time.
- S6. * We used a ***suitable*** method for the computation.
- ***Avoid the following potentially ambiguous terms:***

adequate, appreciable, appropriate, comparatively, considerable, practically, quite, rather, real, relatively, several, somewhat, suitable, tentative, and very.

Choose the least generic word



- S1. **This kind of investigation, i.e. the analysis of the AS profiles, also aims to find sets of nodes which behave similarly and ...*
- S2. **Climatic conditions (i.e. temperature, rainfall) were also checked.*

Choose the least generic word



- S3. By analyzing AS profiles we can also find sets of nodes that behave similarly and ...
- S4. Temperature and rainfall were also checked.

words in series



- You cannot indiscriminately put nouns in front of each other: ***art state technology*** or ***mass destruction weapons***

Solution:

Verify your decisions on Google Scholar

Thanks for Listening

