

4.5. When Pronouns appear “before” the antecedent

In our discussion on pronouns till now, pronouns appear *after* the Noun (*antecedent* of the Pronoun). However, following are the two most prominent scenarios, in which a pronoun can actually appear *before* the antecedent.

1. When the pronoun appears as a part of the introductory modifier
2. Pronoun *it* appearing before the antecedent

Following section discusses these two scenarios in detail:

Scenario 1: When the pronoun appears as a part of the introductory modifier

In such cases, following should be kept in mind:

When a Pronoun appears as part of the *introductory modifier* (most notably *dependent clauses, prepositional phrases or participial phrases*), the pronoun grammatically refers to the Noun *immediately after* that introductory modifier.

Let’s take an example:

Although he had always shown potential, Peter surpassed all expectations by becoming a very successful businessman.

- The pronoun *he* appears as a part of the *introductory modifier: Although he had always shown potential* (dependent clause). Hence, *he* would refer to *Peter*, the Noun *immediately after* the introductory modifier. In other words, *he* in the *introductory modifier* is referring to *Peter*. Hence, this is a valid sentence.

Let’s look at a sentence based on official question (*Reporting that one of its many problems...*):

Analyzing the reasons for its poor performance, the football team said that extreme climatic conditions in the recent past affected few players’ negatively.

Analysis: The pronoun *its* appears as a part of the *introductory modifier: Analyzing the reasons for its poor performance* (participial phrase). Hence, *its* would refer to *the football team*, the Noun *immediately after* the introductory modifier. In other words, the sentence is talking about *the football team’s* poor performance. Hence, this is a valid sentence.

Let’s look at a sentence based on official question (*Although she was considered among her contemporaries to be the better...*), where the pronoun usage is *incorrect*:

Although he spent most of his twenties and thirties as a struggling actor, later Jon Hamm gained prominence in NBC’s drama “Providence”.

Analysis: The pronoun *he* appears as a part of the *introductory modifier: Although he spent most of his twenties and thirties as a struggling actor* (dependent clause). Hence, *he* would refer to the Noun *immediately after* the introductory modifier. However, in this sentence, the introductory modifier is *not* immediately followed by a Noun, but an *Adverb (later)*. This is incorrect. One way to fix this sentence would be:

Although he spent most of his twenties and thirties as a struggling actor, Jon Hamm later gained prominence in NBC’s drama “Providence”.

In this sentence, *he* is correctly referring to *Jon Hamm* (the Noun *immediately after* the introductory modifier).