



**USING REFERENTS**

Referents are words, which refer back to something that has been mentioned before. They not only add variety to your writing and speaking, but also provide cohesion to what you write or say.

Using referents means you can avoid repetition, and make your writing more interesting, easier to read and understand.

Remember, when using pronouns as referents, it is important to identify clearly to what the pronoun refers in your sentence, paragraph or essay. This is to avoid ambiguity.

STUDY TIPS

You can make your writing style more interesting by using referents and, thereby, avoiding repetition of nouns, which would make your writing monotonous.

Remember using referents is an essential writing skill for IELTS Writing Task 2.



**Referents - Pronoun Reference**

Referents are words, which refer back to something that has been mentioned before. They not only add variety to your writing and speaking, but also provide cohesion.

When your writing or communication is cohesive, your sentences flow smoothly, making your writing easier to read and understand. Using cohesive devices, i.e. referents, is essential as a writing skill for IELTS Writing Task 2.

A number of different **referents** can be identified:

**Pronouns**

Pronouns agree in gender (male, female, neuter) and number (singular, plural) with the noun phrase it refers to.

**Personal Pronouns**

- I, you, he/she, it, we, they, one etc.

singular		plural
	I	we
	you	you
male	he, one	they them
female	she, one	
neuter	it	



## Demonstrative Pronouns

- this, that, these, those

singular	plural
this	these
that	those

## Possessive Adjectives

- my, your, his, her, their, one's, its, our

noun phrase	Possessive Adjective		
	male	female	neuter
countable (sg)	his	her	its
uncountable			its
countable (pl)	their		

## EXAMPLES

The artist deposited **the painting** at the National Gallery. **It** became part of the gallery's contemporary collection.

The scientists investigated the **living organisms** in the previous study. **They\*** were found to be unstable in the solution.

The historian wrote about **two of the six presidents**. **These** were remarkable and courageous people.

The **girl**, who witnessed the accident, returned to **her** vehicle.

The **dog** chased **its** tail around the garden.

\* The pronoun (referent) usually refers back to the closest noun.



## Avoiding repetition in your writing

It is important not to repeat subjects too many times because this would make your writing monotonous.

Compare these two styles of writing.

### POOR STYLE

**Environmental pollution** is a serious problem facing our world today.  
**Environmental pollution** is caused by many different factors, for example factories discharging dangerous gases into the air, huge amounts of pesticides seeping into the soil. Though government departments have put measures in place to address the problem, the effects from **environmental pollution** are too far-reaching.

### GOOD STYLE

**Environmental pollution\*\*** is a serious problem facing our world today. **It** is caused by many different factors, for example factories discharging dangerous gases into the air, huge amounts of pesticides seeping into the soil. Though government departments have put measures in place to address the problem, effects from **it** are too far-reaching.

\*\*At the beginning of a new paragraph, it is important to re-introduce the subject and not begin with a pronoun.

Also, nouns should **not** be followed by pronouns.  
For example: My teacher, he returned our assignments.

The use of the pronoun he in this sentence is incorrect. This is an example of duplication (repetition), and is grammatically incorrect.