Recognizing and Correcting

1. **Pronoun Errors**
2. **Possessive Problems**

We began our discussion of the sentence with the idea that a sentence has a subject and a predicate:

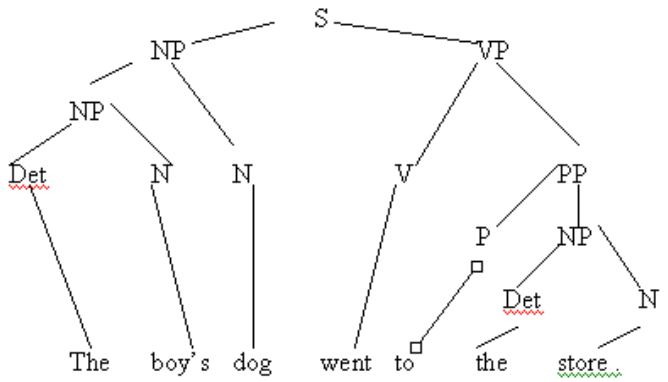
$$S \rightarrow NP \;\; VP$$

and that the noun phrases contained within a sentences subject, that all noun phrases in fact, are constructed as follows:

$$NP \rightarrow \left\{ \frac{\left(\frac{Det}{NP}\right)(Quant)(AdjP)N(PP)}{Pro} \right\}$$

which is to say that a noun phrase can have an optional determiner or embedded noun phrase, a quant, adjective phrases, then the phrase's noun, followed by an optional prepositional phrase. The other alternative is that this whole collection of bits could be replaced with a pronoun.

As part of the process of learning about the noun phrase we learned that embedded noun phrases that appear at the front of any parent NP are always possessives and need to be marked as possessives. Thus, for instance, in the following sentence:



the noun "boy's" is a possessive and needs to be marked as such. Possessives are marked with an apostrophe s (like this—‘s) although there are some exceptions to this rule. One of these exceptions has to do with the fact that we also use the letter s to mark plurals.

What do we do, for instance, if we wanted to write the sentence shown above for the case of several boys' dogs....I think I've maybe just given it away! Did you notice?

Rule:

Use only an apostrophe to show possession when a plural noun ends in "s"

i.e. The boys' dogs.

The dog's tails

"But what about the situation where you have, like a noun that ends in "s"?" you might ask... or

What about situations where there are two people involved?

Some more rules:

Add - 's to show possession when singular nouns end in "s"

i.e. Mr. Jones's grammar exercises.

The business's problem.

Add - 's to only the last noun in a joint or group possession

i.e. Tim and Tom's books were on the shelf.

When these rules are not properly applied to a possessive in a piece of writing the resulting error is marked **Poss.**

...so that's one more set of errors that we can deal with. What about the following situation?

The dog and the cat were sitting on the fence. Then it turned around and went away.

Specifically, what does "it" refer to in the second sentence?

Errors resulting from situations where there is no clear referent for a pronoun, no clear noun that is being referred to by a pronoun, are called *Pronoun Referenc Errors* and can

be marked **Pro. Ref.** or **P.A.** (short for "Pronoun Reference" and Pronoun Antecedent[1] respectively).

Pronoun reference problems can take a number of forms but they are all similar in that it is not clear what a pronoun is referring back to in a previous sentence, or in an earlier part of the sentence where the pronoun resides.

Provide editor's correction marks for the following and then a corrected version of the following. Correct all errors remembering that you now know about and should be able to correct any sentence type errors (Fused, Frag., F.S., R.O.S. as well as P.A. and Poss. Errors)

Mr. Jones class has to do this homework where they have to fix other student's mistakes, then they have to check their answers'. It is not easy but Mr. Jones' assignments evilness is well know around this schools halls' and is to be expected. I talked to one student and then another we agreed that he is evil. "How do people get away with it" I ask, and you might to. We should complain about these exercises difficulty and his evilness, and the limit of the time that they have and how it's difficult to even understand it in the first place.

[1] *Antecedent* is a word that means the thing which went before. So that when using a pronoun, a specific noun would be used before, that the pronoun would clearly refer to. If there wasn't (as in the case shown here) there is no clear antecedent.