

TASK 1B

REFERENCE WORDS

INTRODUCTION:

REFERENCE WORDS are used to:

- Refer back to people, objects and ideas that have been mentioned earlier, or
- Refer forward to people, objects and ideas that will be mentioned later

These words allow the writer to avoid repeating words, paragraphs and sometimes whole sentences.

REFERENCE WORDS INCLUDE:

- Personal pronouns. The personal pronouns are I, you, she, he, it, we, they.
- Possessive pronouns. The possessive pronouns show a relationship of ownership or 'belonging to'. ...
- Demonstratives. ...
- Comparatives. ...
- The definite article 'the' ...
- General reference.

"Reference words" allow a writer to create cohesion throughout a text. They constitute a large group of mostly "pronouns" and "noun phrases," less frequently other parts of speech. Reference words represent other elements in a text and allow the writer to manipulate these elements in different ways.

Two notable features about them:

1. They cannot stand alone; rather, they need to connect with other words to complete their meanings.
2. They are used when new information is added about the things that they refer to, hence, the name "reference words."

<https://www.rit.edu/ntid/sea/processes/referencewords/intro>

Reference words are very common in many reading texts and can often cause some confusion. An important part of understanding a text is being able to identify the reference words and their relationship to other words, phrases or sentences.

Look at the sentence below:

Some people believe that a university education should be available to everyone as a university education will help with employment.

The problem here is that ‘**university education**’ has been repeated – the sentence would have been better presented using a *reference word* like this:

*Some people believe that a university education should be available to everyone as **this** will help with employment.*

Test your skills – what do the underlined words refer to? Choose the correct letter A-C.

New Zealand is becoming an increasingly popular destination for overseas visitors. It attracts tourists and people on business, but the vast majority come as students. Mostly from Asian countries, they stay for anything from a few weeks to a few years or more, studying at language schools, colleges and universities. New Zealand can offer good homestay accommodation, a clean and beautiful environment and a reasonable cost of tuition. These factors attract an ever-increasing number of overseas students, accounting for millions of dollars in revenue for New Zealand.

It refers to

- (a) overseas
- (b) New Zealand
- (c) a popular destination

They refers to

- (a) Asian countries
- (b) tourists and business people
- (c) students

These factors refers to

- (a) accommodation, environment and reasonable tuition costs

- (b) schools, colleges, universities
- (c) increasing overseas students

Understanding reference words – 3 important tips

Tip 1: Subject or object reference words

Be careful – reference words can change depending on whether they are the subject or the object of the sentence. For example:

Overseas students often find university courses difficult.

- **They** often find university courses difficult.
- Overseas students often find **them** difficult.

Mr Smith works with Mr Jones every day.

- **He** works with Mr Jones every day.
- Mr Smith works with **him** every day.

Tip 2: Singular and plural

When talking generally, you may find that some singular nouns take a plural reference word. For example:

A teacher (singular) should always be prepared. They (plural) should also be punctual.

Tip 3: The dummy subject

Sometimes ‘it’ can appear in a sentence but it is not a true reference word – it doesn’t refer back to anything specific. This is called the dummy subject. For example:

It *is commonly accepted that people with a higher education generally work in higher paid jobs.*

In the sentence above, ‘it’ does not refer to anything specific, just the general situation.

Practice by reading the sentences below and deciding whether ‘it’ is used as a reference word or a dummy subject.

1. Look at those clouds. **It**’s going to rain.
2. Homework is essential. **It** allows students to review work they have studied in class.

3. Admittedly, student depression is hard to investigate as few people are willing to talk openly about it.
4. It can take up to four years to complete a degree.
5. Otago is a very popular university. It was the first university in New Zealand.

TASK:

In the text “**What does a mechanical engineering technologist do?**” (Task 1) find the words in **bold** and check what they refer to

PAGE 1:

they

they

their

their

PAGE 2:

who

them

this

PAGE 3:

their

they

these

they

PAGE 4:

them