

## UNIT ONE

### 1.2. Point of Views in Academic Writing

Point of view is the perspective from which an essay is written. The following chart lists both the personal pronouns and their possessive forms used with these points of view:

|                      | Singular   | Plural                     |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I, me (my, mine)   | we, us (our, ours)         |
| <b>Second Person</b> | you (your, yours)  | you (your, yours)          |
| <b>Third Person</b>  | she, her (her, hers) he,<br>him (his)<br>it (its)<br>one (one's) | them, they (their, theirs) |

**When choosing appropriate point of view for academic or formal writing, consider the type and purpose of the assignment.**

| <b>Consistency is Key!</b>   |
|--|
| When using any of the three points of view, maintaining consistency is vital. Switching between points of view can be confusing for the reader. Choose a suitable perspective and then stay with it. |
| Unclear: <i>The accident happened right in front of <b>us</b> so <b>you</b> could see who was at fault.</i>  |
| Revised: <i>The accident happened right in front of <b>us</b> so <b>we</b> could see who was at fault.</i>   |

### FIRST PERSON

**First-person point of view** is used to write stories/narratives or examples about personal experiences from your own life. If you are writing based on personal experience, as is the case for many college memoir classes, the first person point of view might work best, as it emphasizes the writer. The first person point of view allows the writer to inject emotion and purpose into the piece, as they control the flow of the action. As the narrator, they have detail exclusivity, meaning that they are privy to the surrounding events (both the physical action and the personal thought processes associated with that action) of the personal experience.

**Note the following paragraph:**

*Several people have made a lasting impression on **me**. I remember one person in particular who was significant to **me**. Mr. Smith, **my** high school English teacher, helped **my** family and **me** through a difficult time during **my** junior year. **We** appreciated his care, kindness, and financial help after the loss of **our** home in a devastating fire.*

**Note:** Academic writing often requires us to **avoid** first-person point of view in favor of third-person point of view, which can be more objective and convincing. Often, students will say, “**I think** the author is very convincing.” Taking out *I* makes a stronger statement or claim: “The author is very convincing.”

**Task 01**

Discuss in pairs and enlists the pros and cons of using First-person point of view.

**Task 02. Complete the following sentences, using first person pronouns.**

- I was minding \_\_\_\_\_ own business when Mom burst in. "What's with you?" \_\_\_\_\_ grumbled.
- Our Senior Capstone class took the Major Field Test on Tuesday. The test was made up of multiple-choice questions. \_\_\_\_\_ were tested on our knowledge of concepts related to accounting, finance, marketing, statistics and the legal environment. I looked around the room to see the faces of \_\_\_\_\_ classmates, who were scratching their heads and deep in thought. They clearly were not prepared.
- I almost cried when \_\_\_\_\_ forgot the lines to \_\_\_\_\_ speech for the treasurer of our student council. I noticed \_\_\_\_\_ teacher talking hurriedly to members of the faculty. A stern look sat upon his face. I thought to myself, "They must think \_\_\_\_\_ did not prepare well."
- Our class listened to a lecture on the proper procedure for evacuation during an emergency. \_\_\_\_\_ were instructed to line up and exit in an orderly and calm fashion. \_\_\_\_\_ class then practiced the drill. Once outside, however, \_\_\_\_\_ found not the usual silence that comes with following orders, but the loud, chattering mouths of hungry teenagers waiting for recess.

## SECOND PERSON

**Second-person point of view**, which directly addresses the reader, works well for giving advice or explaining how to do something. It is not often seen in fiction writing, but is very common in short pieces of non-fiction such as speeches and letters. It is also used to construct “how-to” tutorials. A process analysis paper would be a good choice for using the second-person point of view, as shown in this paragraph:

*In order to prepare microwave popcorn, **you** will need a microwave and a box of microwave popcorn which **you’ve** purchased at a grocery store. First of all, **you** need to remove the popcorn package from the box and take off the plastic wrap. Next, open **your** microwave and place the package in the center with the proper side up. Then set **your** microwave for the suggested number of minutes as stated on the box. Finally, when the popcorn is popped, **you’re** ready for a great treat.*

**Note:** Academic writing generally **avoids** second-person point of view in favor of third-person point of view. Second person can be too casual for formal writing, and it can also alienate the reader if the reader does not identify with the idea.

### Replacing *You*

In academic writing, sometimes **you** needs to be replaced with nouns or proper nouns to create more formality or to clarify the idea. Here are some examples:

| Inappropriate Use of “You”  | Revised to Replace “You”  |
|---|---|
| Uprisings in prison often occur when <b>you</b> allow overcrowded conditions. (Are you, the reader, allowing the conditions?) | Uprisings in prison often occur when <b>the authorities</b> allow overcrowded conditions. (Identifies who is doing what.) |
| In Russia <b>you</b> usually have to stand in long lines to buy groceries. (Are you, the reader, shopping in Russia?)         | Russian <b>customers</b> usually have to stand in long lines to buy groceries. (Identifies who is doing what.)            |
| In many states, <b>you</b> have prisons with few rehabilitation programs. (Do you, the reader, have prisons?)                 | In many states, <b>prisons</b> have few rehabilitation programs. (Identifies the actual subject of the sentence.)         |

**Task 03**

Discuss in pairs and enlists the pros and cons of using Second-person point of view.

**Task 04. Complete the following sentences, using Second-person pronouns.**

- You walk into the cave and hear a low rumble. "What is it?" \_\_\_\_ wonder.
- When you see her dressed like that, \_\_\_\_ think to yourself "What was she thinking?"
- "You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here \_\_\_\_ are, and \_\_\_\_ cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy." (Jay McInherney, *Bright Lights, Big City*, 1984)
- "When television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite each of you to sit down in front of \_\_\_\_\_ television set when your station goes on the air and stay there, for a day, without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper, without a profit and loss sheet or a rating book to distract \_\_\_\_\_. Keep \_\_\_\_\_ eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure \_\_\_\_\_ that what \_\_\_\_\_ will observe is a vast wasteland." (Newton N. Minow, "Television and the Public Interest." Speech to the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C., on May 9, 1961)

**Third-person point of view** identifies people by proper noun (a given name such as Ella Clark) or noun (such as *teachers*, *students*, *doctors*, or *players*) and uses the pronouns *he*, *she*, and *they*. Third person also includes the use of *one*, *everyone*, and *anyone*. Most formal, academic writing uses the third person. Note the use of various third-person nouns and pronouns in the following:

*The **bosses** at the factory have decided that **employees** need a day of in-house training. Times have been scheduled for **everyone**. Several senior **employees** will be required to make five-minute presentations. **One** is not eager to speak in front of others since **she**'s very shy. **Another one**, however, is anxious to relate **her** expertise. The variation in routine should provide an interesting day for all **people** concerned.*

### **Third Person Pronouns: Gender-Fair Use of Language**

If you were to observe the action from a distance, the point of view most likely utilized would be the third person point of view. The participants of the action in this piece would be referred to with pronouns such as “he,” “she,” and “they.”

In the past, if you wanted to refer to one unnamed person, you used the masculine pronoun: *If a person is strong, **he** will stand up for **himself**.* Today, you should avoid the automatic use of the masculine pronoun because it is considered chauvinist language.

Also avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes by assigning a particular gendered pronoun: *A doctor should listen to **his** patients. A nurse should listen to **her** patients.* These examples make assumptions that doctors are men and nurses are women, which is a gender stereotype.

Using *he or she* is a possible solution, but not if the phrase comes several times in a row. The sentence becomes clunky and awkward: *If a person is strong, **he or she** will stand up for **himself or herself** when **he or she** believes in something.*

Another strategy is to use *they* or *them*. Remember, however, that *they* or *them* must refer to a plural, such as *people*, *doctors*, or *students*: *If people are strong, **they** will stand up for **themselves** when **they** believe in something.*

**Task 05**

Discuss in pairs and enlists the pros and cons of using Third-person point of view.

**Task 06. Complete the following sentences, using Third-person pronouns.**

- The boys went home together after a long day at school. \_\_\_\_\_ were hungry and thirsty, so \_\_\_\_\_ decided to go to the local snack shop. \_\_\_\_\_ parents gave them money so that \_\_\_\_\_ could have an afternoon snack, but when the boys approached the snack shop, there was a sign that said "Closed". What are \_\_\_\_\_ going to do?
- Marcus had a big crush on Vanessa. \_\_\_\_ didn't know how to tell \_\_\_\_, so \_\_\_\_ wrote a secret admirer note. Marcus knew where Vanessa's locker was, so \_\_\_\_ stuffed the note into one of the openings above the locker. \_\_\_\_ wanted to reveal to Vanessa that \_\_\_\_ was the one who wrote the note, but \_\_\_\_ didn't know how.

Practice:

Correct any inconsistencies of person in these sentences. If necessary, change the verbs to make them agree with any new subjects. Re-write the correct sentences.

Example:

Each hiker should bring **your** own lunch.

Each hiker should bring *his or her* own lunch.

1. The first person at the counter gets their order filled quickly.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Jane treats me like family when I visit her. She always makes you feel at home.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. A student has to show their identification card in order to borrow books from the library.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I love to go dancing. You can exercise, work off tensions, and have fun all at the same time.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If a person has lived in a city, you may find the country too quiet.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The cast members have discovered that you have to work together to prepare for the performance.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. A person with high blood pressure should watch their diet.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. When Lee and I ride our bikes to work at 6 A.M., you can see the city waking up.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Point of View Worksheet

**Directions:** determine from which point of view the passage is narrated. Explain your answers in the box.

**Viewpoints:** first-person, second-person, third-person objective, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient.

1. Walter crumpled the business section of the newspaper. He couldn't believe the headline: "Zanogram Sold for 4 Billions Smackaroos!" He could recall starting that company with his partner Zap just a few years earlier. Now Walter had nothing and was riding the bus while Zap took champagne bubble baths. The bus driver noticed that Walter looked distressed. He was genuinely concerned about Walter, but he had learned a long time ago not to pry into the fare's affairs.

Narrator's Perspective:

Explain how you know:

2. "Ding!" Katie looked at her phone. It was a text message from Jeff. "Ugh! Not now," she said to herself. She was mad at Jeff for a comment that he had made the last time that they spoke. Meanwhile, while Katie was ignoring Jeff, he was at home trying to figure out why Katie was mad at him. "Did I say something that might have made her angry?" he thought to himself. "No, I have been a perfect gentleman," he concluded.

Narrator's Perspective:

Explain how you know:

3. "Crash!" The sound of falling bowling pins fills the air. You walk to the counter and address the attendant. You mention that he has given you shoes in the wrong size. He politely corrects the error. You walk back to your party. It is your turn. You put on your shoes, find your ball, and approach the lane. You wait until the lanes are clear. Then you waddle up to the lane and roll the ball between your legs, grandma style. Your friends cheer. The bumpers ensure that the roll is devastating.

Narrator's Perspective:

Explain how you know:

4. The tombstone was in place, but there was a gaping hole where there was supposed to be a field of grass. "Oh, great," I said, "the body's been exhumed." Cliff looked at me curiously and asked, "What



does 'exhumed' mean?" I pointed to the hole in the ground and replied with an irate tone, "Well, Cliff, there's an empty hole where the body is supposed to be. Based on the context of this situation, can you infer what 'exhumed' means?" Cliff shrugged his shoulders.

Narrator's Perspective:

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Explain how you know:

5. Bones loaded the rifle on his lap. He wasn't sure he could win, but he knew he wasn't going down without a fight. He wasn't afraid, but he was nervous with anticipation. He knew that they were coming. Then three men on ATVs pulled up to his house. They were wearing leather jackets with red skulls on the back. One of the men wore a yellow band on his arm. He had a green Mohawk. He was the one who screamed, "Give us the girl and we'll let you live." Bones didn't believe them. He looked at the girl. Bones thought that she looked scared. He would never let them have her.

Narrator's Perspective:

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Explain how you know:

6. Diego looked over the edge. He thought about how far the ground was. The wind gusted. Whitney turned to him and said, "It's beautiful up here, huh?" Diego could not think about beauty. All he could think about was not falling off the edge. He said, "Yeah, Whitney, it really is beautiful. Hey, how long do you want to stay up here?" Whitney laughed and said, "Let's stay up here the rest of our lives!" Diego grimaced. He was afraid that this scenario was all too likely.

Narrator's Perspective:

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Explain how you know:

7. A young girl in a scout uniform knocked on the front door of a white mansion. A man wearing a tuxedo with tails answered the door. "May I help you?" the man asked. The young girl began speaking, "Would you like to buy some cookies? Some of the proceeds go to charity." The man cut off the young girl by saying, "Let me see if the head of the home is available." The young girl smiled and straightened the buttons on her uniform.

Narrator's Perspective:

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Explain how you know:

8. Juan held the space rock in his hand and imagined that he was on the moon. He started bouncing around the gymnasium as though he were in a zero gravity setting. Mr. Worser chased after him and said, "Juan, put that moon rock back on the table!" Juan couldn't hear Mr. Worser because Juan was so

involved in his imaginary scenario. "Beep! Commander, bring the lunar rover in for a landing," Juan was saying to himself. Mr. Worser grabbed Juan by the shoulder. This brought Juan back to reality.

Narrator's Perspective:

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|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Explain how you know:</b></p> |
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