



## POINT OF VIEW

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Point of view is the perspective from which an essay is written: first person (I or we), second person (you), or third person (he/she/it/one or they). The following chart lists both the personal pronouns and their possessive forms used with these points of view:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	I, me (my, mine)	we, us (our, ours)
Second person	you (your, yours)	you (your, yours)
Third person	he, him (his) she, her (her, hers) it (its)	them, they (their, theirs)

### FIRST PERSON

When you narrate an incident in which you have participated, you use **first-person point of view**. You are the *I* who tells the action. Autobiographical narratives (writings based primarily on personal experience) are written in the first person. A significant person essay, a remembered event essay and informal letters would be examples of writing from the first person point of view. 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.*

### SECOND PERSON

The **you or second-person point of view**, which emphasizes the reader, works well for giving advice or explaining how to do something. A process paper would be a good choice for using the second-person point of view, as shown in this paragraph:

*In order to serve a TV dinner, **you** will need several items: an oven or microwave and a frozen dinner which **you've** purchased at a grocery store. First of all, **you** turn **your** oven to the required temperature setting as stated on the box. Next, **you** need to remove the dinner from the box and take off the plastic cover. Then **you** put **your** dinner in the oven for the suggested number of minutes. Finally, when the dinner is cooked, **you're** ready for a gourmet feast.*

### THIRD PERSON

Another perspective is **third-person point of view**. As you tell a true incident or a fictional story in the third person, you use the pronouns *he*, *she*, and *they* to refer to people in your writing when you do not use their names. Biographical narratives

(writings about other people's lives) and most formal writing generally are written in the third person. Note the use of various third-person pronouns in the following:

*The bosses at the factory have decided that employees need a day of in-house training. **They** have scheduled times for **everyone**, no matter what department **he's** in. 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.*

## **PROBLEMS WITH THIRD PERSON**

**Problem**--In the past, if you wanted to refer to one unnamed person, you used the masculine pronoun as shown in the following sentence: *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 sexist language.

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

**Solution**--Vary the use of *he* and *she*, as demonstrated in the sample paragraph at the top of this page. Another solution is to use *people* and *they* or *them*. Remember, however, that *they* or *them* must refer to a plural, such as *many people* or *some people*.

**Problem**--Using *one* as a third person pronoun, meaning a singular person, can sound stuffy when repeated. *One* is an option for solving the *he/she* problem, and it is appropriate for formal writing. Nevertheless, when repeated, *one* can sound stuffy and awkward: *How many times can **one** say **one** before **one** makes **oneself** sound silly?*

**Solution**--If you do select the pronoun *one*, here are some alternative noun and pronoun choices you might employ in order to avoid the redundant use of *one*: *person, he, she, someone, anyone, nobody, somebody, each, everybody, everyone, and no one*.

**Problem**--Finally, writers who are having difficulty settling on an appropriate point of view sometimes shift confusingly from one to another: *The accident happened right in front of **us** so **you** could see who was at fault.*

**Solution**--Choose a suitable perspective and then stay with it. Don't shift from *a person* to *you* or from *you* to *I*: *The accident happened right in front of **us** so **we** could see who was at fault.*



