Point of View

What Is Point of View?

Point of View (also referred to as Person) is simply the writer’s perspective.

As a writer, you should use different points of view in different situations. Keeping the following in mind will help you in choosing your Point of View.
- **1st Person** is used to indicate a personal experience, opinion, or evaluation.
- **2nd Person** is used to instruct or address the reader.
- **3rd Person** is used to generalize an experience or situation through an objective discussion.

In general, writing in **3rd Person** is the best option for academic writing, unless your assignment indicates otherwise.

Description of Persons

**First Person/Singular**
- I, me
- my, mine

**First Person/Plural**
- we, our
- our, ours

**Second Person/Singular**
- you
- your, yours

**Second Person/Plural**
- you
- your, yours
Third Person/Singular
  " he, him, she, her, it
  " his, her, hers, its

Third Person/Plural
  " they, them
  " their, theirs

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

The word or phrase that a pronoun refers to and replaces is called its antecedent. Pronouns must agree in both number and person.

Number
Pronouns should be consistently singular or plural, depending on the number of the antecedent.
  · Singular: The boy was confused, so he asked for help.
  · Plural: Because the students were confused, they did not complete their assignments.

Person
Pronouns must be in a consistent person throughout an entire sentence.
  · First Person: I wanted to finish my homework.
  · Second Person: You should finish your homework.
  · Third Person: When one completes the homework, he or she should turn it in.
Eliminating 2nd Person Writing

If a writer’s purpose requires it, writing in 2nd Person can be acceptable in academic writing, but most often, writers use 2nd Person in an attempt to include large groups of people or speak generally. Unless, using 2nd Person is necessary and intentional, writers should avoid it.

In general, writers can effectively eliminate using 2nd Person by being specific, without addressing the reader. For example,

1) When disciplining your children, you should never raise your voice.
   versus
2) When disciplining their children, parents should never raise their voices.

1) Considering all this, you can clearly see that wearing your seat belts at all times is best.
   versus
2) Considering all this, drivers can clearly see that wearing their seat belts at all times is best.

Also, be aware that beginning a sentence with a verb (a “command”) automatically puts it in 2nd Person. Although it is not directly stated, “you” is the implied subject.

1) (You) Consider these facts before making a decision.
   versus
2) Drivers should consider these facts before making a decision.

What Person Should I Write In?

As the author and the expert on your paper, this decision is ultimately yours, unless your instructor specifically directs you.

When making this decision, ask yourself, “What is my purpose, and who is my audience?”

Use 1st Person if you intend to tell a personal narrative or write a reflective letter.
Use **2nd Person** if you intend to write a “How to” essay or write a cover letter to a resume.

Use **3rd Person** if you intend to tell a narrative objectively, present an argument or do a research paper.

* Please note that writing in 3rd Person is the best option for academic writing, unless your assignment permits otherwise.

**Sources**
