

Establishing Points of View

Point of view helps readers understand who is “speaking” and who the intended audience is. Committing to a point of view helps writers maintain a consistent voice throughout their writing.

Although there is not necessarily a right or wrong point of view to write with, different points of view better fit different circumstances and contexts. For example, academic writing tends to prefer third person point of view because it is the most objective and most formal.

FIRST PERSON	SECOND PERSON	THIRD PERSON
<p>Phrases include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I”, “my”, or “we” <p>Example: We tested the carrots for traces of pesticide.</p> <p>Example: I believe in the right of free speech in our country.</p>	<p>Phrases include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “you” or “your” <p>Example: You tested the carrots for traces of pesticide.</p> <p>Example: You should believe in the right of free speech in America.</p>	<p>Phrases include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> names of nouns, “they”, “their”, “she”, or “he” <p>Example: The scientist tested her carrots for traces of pesticide.</p> <p>Example: Americans believe in the right of free speech.</p>
<p>Effective for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments that ask writers to reflect on their own opinions or responses informal writing such as notes or discussion posts 	<p>Effective for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments that ask writers to address a specific person personal correspondence such as letters or emails 	<p>Effective for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assignments that ask writers to research, analyze, or argue a stance formal academic or professional writing genres
<p>Pros & cons to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great for clarifying the writer’s role and ideas Establishes emotional connection with readers May be perceived as subjective or biased May constrain to only their own perspective 	<p>Pros & cons to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great for making readers feel like they are participating in the text May be confusing to readers when used unintentionally or sporadically 	<p>Pros & cons to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great for sharing a broader perspective Creates a formal, objective tone May be difficult to establish an emotional connection with readers

Tip: To quickly correct point of view shifts during your editing process, use ctrl+f or command+f to “find” instances of the pronoun you want to change.