

# PERSON

Person refers to the particular perspective in which writing is developed.

First person	I	Personal narratives or essays coming from the writer's experience
Second person	You	Writer addresses the reader as in process analysis. The "you" might be explicitly stated or it could be implied
Third person	He, she, it	Reports about a person, place, thing, or idea. Refers to anyone or anything that is not an "I" or "you"

**Avoid using the first and second person perspective when writing analysis or academic papers.** Even though your instructor may be asking for your views on a topic, you'll be required to maintain an objective point of view. Sentences that include first person phrases such as I think, I feel, I believe, etc. limit the scope of the topic's examination to the writer's opinion and experience. They do not leave room for the reader's considerations. Using second person "you" statements are problematic in academic essays, as well, because they mistakenly suggest that the writer knows what the reader thinks or feels.



The third person indirectly includes the writer's opinion. But, this perspective also relates to a larger group of readers because the paper is developed as an *observation* of facts and details that the writer or other sources have made regarding the topic. Consequently, the reader observes the information too. Third person identifies, investigates and **reports** on the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a topic, but in a less personal method than the "I" and "you" points of view. It achieves a certain distance that is needed for the reader to remain objective, to weigh the information, and to determine his own thoughts about the topic. Academic inquiry requires this third person perspective to provide opportunities to think about ideas generated by the discussion.

First Person Pronouns	Second Person Pronouns	Third Person Pronouns
I, me, my, mine, myself, we, us, our, ours, ourselves	you, your, yours, yourself, yourselves	he, she, it, his, her, hers, its, they, their, theirs, them, themselves, himself, herself

**Tip:** Brainstorm in the first person, if doing so will help you get started with your assignment. Develop a first draft using phrases such as: "I think, I feel, my opinion about...is..." Then, as you revise, go through the paper and circle any first or second person words and make all necessary adjustments to the sentences to bring them back into the objective third person. Be careful to note that making one change in the sentence will require that additional modifications be made.

For example:

- I think that it is wrong for political candidates to accept campaign contributions from lobbyists. (*first person*) If **you** have ever heard about lobbyists contributing money to a campaign **you** may have wondered if they were trying to get special favors from the politician for their group. (*second person*)
- Political candidates should not accept campaign contributions from lobbyists. Accepting campaign money from lobbyists is wrong because there may be conflicts of interest between the politician and the lobbying group. Many of these conflicts of interest have been tracked by the Pew Research Center. (*third person*)

The third person version in the example above indirectly states the opinion of the writer with his "should not" phrase. Notice the writer did not need to rely on "I." By developing ideas in the third person the writer can maintain agreement and consistency of person throughout the paper even when he brings in evidence from outside sources as support. The writer does not need to shift from first to third person to make his point.

The third person provides more options for the writer to discuss his topic. Use a thesaurus to find alternative third person nouns that have similar meanings. These additional word choices can be interchanged in the essay and will create **unity with variety** in third person writing.

Examples of Third Person Noun Options		
politician	lobbyist	conflict
he, Mr. Smith, Bob, the government official, the candidate, representative, statesman, legislator, political servant, etc.	she, Ms. Susan Jones, activist, petitioner, solicitor, advocate, campaigner, crusader, promoter, etc.	it, problem, issue, concern