

When writing any document, a writer needs to consider from what point of view he/she should write. Point of view is the voice in which the author chooses: first person, second person, or third person. In college writing, it is important to be consistent with point of view throughout an entire document unless there are valid reasons for shifting the point of view.

First Person

First person point of view is commonly called the “I” or “we” viewpoint. The writer is the “I” in the document. Many novels or memoirs are written in the first person point of view because it emphasizes the writer or teller of the story. Typically, reflective or narrative assignments will be in the first person point of view. This is a more **casual or informal** point of view for writing.

Example: I waited for the city bus to be at my stop.

Example: We waited for the city bus to be at our stop.

Second Person

Second person point of view is told by using “you.” Using “you” puts importance on the relationship between the writer and the reader. **Students should be cautious about using second person point of view** because, in most cases, college instructors desire a more formal tone. One reason for that is that the relationship between the writer and the reader is not present or is not the focus of most academic writing. In addition, the “you” or “your” may not apply to all readers. Because most academic writing is written to a broad audience or even “anyone,” a “you” or “your” that does not apply to the reader(s) could distract, confuse, or offend.

Example: You waited for the city bus to be at your stop. *(What if some audience members do not use the city bus system? This statement would not apply and could distract the reader.)*

Example: While you and other “white trash” waited for the city bus to be at your stop, it started to rain. *(This could be highly offense because it’s implying that your reader(s) is/are “white trash.”)*

Example: While you waited for the city bus this morning to transport you to school, it started to rain. *(This could be confusing to readers who did not wait for the city bus that morning, who needed a ride to work rather than school, or did not encounter rain. The writer most likely means “I,” and, therefore, should use “I.”)*

Third Person

There are a few varieties of third person but when writing in third person point of view the writer focuses on the information in the writing, not the writer. When writing in third person, a writer uses pronouns like “he,” “she,” “they,” and “it.” This point of view is commonly used for formal writings like argument, persuasion, informative, and report writing.

Example: They waited for the city bus to be at their stop.

Example: He waited for the city bus to be at his stop.

Example: She waited for the city bus to be at her stop.