

The Writing Center

DLA: Understanding POV in Writing



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

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Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note:

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour):

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Academic Writing

College writing may be challenging to students for various reasons; however, the ultimate goal is to communicate clearly to any person reading your writing, and there are several items to keep in mind when writing for academic purposes. One of the conventions in writing is understanding when and how to use different points of view (POV) in academic writing. POV is the perspective in which the work is being written. When choosing the appropriate POV for academic writing, you will want to consider the type of assignment, as well as the purpose of the assignment. Also, checking in with your professor on the rules/parameters for the assignment is important for determining which POV is appropriate.

Understanding Point of View (POV)

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I, me, my, mine	We, us, our(s)
Second Person	You, your(s)	You, your(s)
Third Person	They, them, their(s) She, her(s) He, him, his It, its One, one's	They, them, their(s)

The Importance of Consistency: Whichever of the three POVs you decide to use, you want to make sure to maintain consistency throughout your writing. Avoid switching between points of view since this can cause confusion for your reader and interrupt the flow in your writing. For example...

Inconsistent: In order for **one** to understand the character's internal struggle, **we** need to reread the passage. (Third person & First person)

Consistent: In order for **us** to understand the character's internal struggle, **we** need to reread the passage. (First Person)

Understanding First Person Usage

Writers use the first person POV when writing stories/narratives or examples about personal experiences from your own life. Personal narrative essays or personal statements are often the most appropriate assignments to use first person POV.

Understanding Second Person Usage

Writers use the second person to offer instructions or directly address the reader. This method works well when writing a process analysis paper or when giving advice or explaining how to do something.

Unclear usage of "you"	Revised usage (replacing "you")
The U.S. education system suffers when you allow for overcrowded classrooms and underpaid teachers. (Are you, the reader, allowing this to happen?)	The U.S. education system suffers when government legislators allow for overcrowded classrooms and underpaid teachers. (Recognizes who is allowing this)
In many states, you have prisons with few rehabilitation programs. (Do you, the reader, have prisons?)	In many states, prisons have few rehabilitation programs. (Recognizes the true subject of the sentence)

Note: Second person can sometimes be too casual for formal or academic writing. It can also alienate the reader if they do not identify with the ideas/content. In some disciplines like administrative justice or nursing, it is appropriate to use second person; in addition, it may be appropriate to use second person when providing directions. It is important to note, however, that many disciplines like English and humanities courses require writers to avoid second person.

Understanding Third Person Usage

Writers use third person POV when referring to or identifying people by proper noun (someone's name) or noun (such as referring to teachers, students, doctors, employees, etc). Third person also uses the pronouns *they*, *she*, and *he*, and it uses the broader *one*, *everyone*, and *anyone*, and *it*. Usually, formal/academic writing uses third person POV. The following paragraph uses various third person nouns and pronouns:

The school **counselors** decided to put together an achievement ceremony for the graduating class. **Everyone** from different departments on campus were invited to attend, and the college **president** was set to make a speech congratulating those who were being honored. Students were nominated by their instructors, and some **students** were asked to give an impromptu speech upon receiving **their** award. **One** declined because **she** gets nervous speaking in front of large crowds, but **everyone** in the crowd applauded **her** anyway. It was a wonderful day for celebration and the **counselors** felt proud to see **students** receiving recognition for **their** accomplishments.

Third Person Pronouns: Gender-Fair Use of Language and Singular “They”

In the past, if you wanted to refer to an unnamed person, you would use the masculine pronoun: *If a person is strong, he will stand up for himself.* Today, you should avoid the automatic or assumed use of the masculine pronoun because it is considered sexist language. Also, avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes by assigning a gendered pronoun: *A doctor should listen to his patients. A nurse should listen to her patients.* These examples make assumptions that doctors are male, and nurses are female, which is an outdated and sexist stereotype.

How do I use singular “they”?

Singular **they** has two uses: specific and generic (“Pronouns”).

Specific Use: The MLA advises writers to always follow the personal pronouns of individuals they write about. Therefore, if a person’s pronoun is they, the following sentence is correct:

Jules is writing **their** research paper on Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*.

The use of singular **they** is widely accepted. In September 2019, Merriam-Webster even added a new definition to the entry for they in its online dictionary, stating that they can refer to a “single person whose gender identity is nonbinary” (“They,” def. 3d).

Generic Use: **They** is also used “as a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context,” as the seventh edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association attests (120). This use of singular **they**, until very recently discouraged in academic writing and other formal contexts, allows writers to omit gendered pronouns from a sentence like the following:

Example: Each taxpayer must file **his or her** tax return before April 15th.

Instead, writers may substitute his or her for singular **they**: Each taxpayer must file **their** tax return before April 15th.

Correcting First person into Third person

Sometimes writing in first person can help us get our opinions/ideas/beliefs/etc. out onto paper. However, if your instructor or writing assignment is strictly asking you to only write in third person, here are some ways to correct and change your writing from first person POV into third person POV.

- **First person:** I think tutoring is important because it allows students a chance to work on their writing skills through a one-on-one interaction.

Remove the “I think” from the previous sentence, and now you have a sentence written in third person. It is still your opinion, but now you have changed the POV.

- **Revised for Third person:** Tutoring is important because it allows students a chance to work on their writing skills through a one-on-one interaction.

Here is an example when using the first person “we”:

- **First person:** As a society, we need to have more compassion and understanding for others.

Change “we” to something more general, like “people” since you are talking about a general topic like society.

- **Revised for Third person:** People need to have more compassion and understanding for others.

Correcting Second person into Third person

Besides writing in first person, it can also feel natural to write in second person POV. However, if your instructor or writing assignment is strictly asking you to only write in third person, here are some ways to correct and change your writing from second person POV into third person POV.

- **Second person:** If you still disagree with this fact, then you might need to do more research.

Replace the pronoun “you” with a more general third person pronoun.

- **Third person:** Someone who still disagrees with this fact might need to do more research.

References:

-MLA Style Center: <https://style.mla.org/using-singular-they>

-St. Louis Community College Writing Center’s “Point of View in Academic Writing”

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

☐ **1. Academic Writing Review**

When is it appropriate to use second person? Why?

What are the three POVs in Academic Writing? Why is it important to use consistency with point of view in academic writing?

☐ 2. Paragraph Correction

Read the following introductory paragraph about benefits of mindful meditations for college students and rewrite it using correct Point of View (POV) usage, as mentioned above.

With all the stress that comes as a college student, I can't help but become anxious at the thought of trying to manage all of your classes and maintain your social life. Fortunately for some of us, agonizing overdue dates, essays, tests, and parking, and spending enough time with our friends, family, and significant others won't overwhelm us once August rolls around with the help of our daily, mindful meditations. For students who do find himself or herself currently panicking over the start of a new semester, the time to start practicing mindful meditations is never too soon. Keeping this in mind, I present to you a breakdown of some of the many benefits that can help alleviate stress and increase time management from applying mindful meditations.

Choose 3a OR 3b Below

☐ 3a. Correct Your Own Writing

Locate an essay you have previously written or one you are presently working on and identify areas where you have used academic writing conventions, such as point of view. Revise these areas to communicate in a clearer and more consistent style. Bring your essay with the added revisions to the tutoring session.

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (3b).

□ 3b. Sentence Correction

Review the sentences below and identify the inconsistencies in point of view (POV). Then on a separate sheet of paper revise accordingly so that each is consistent in its POV usage. Be prepared to tell your tutor both what you thought needed revision and why you revised it accordingly.

1. As soon as you start to look carefully at the cost of college tuition, we can frequently find evidence of unnecessary fees that college students pay.
2. In looking for her missing glasses, Allison also found her old phone charger, and she donated it to us to keep in the library since she no longer needed it.
3. I believe that without clear leadership from the United Nations, one is likely to find ourselves in a similar position next year.
4. Personally, I think that economic stability depends upon social cohesion.
5. I have worries about someone getting into my personal information while using the school servers.

Change the following first and second person POVs into third person.

6. I believe that parking permits should be free for students who are paying tuition at the school they attend.
7. In order to succeed in college, you need to find a support system that you can rely on.
8. When looking through research on critical race theory, I have found that racism is considered to be systemic in various laws and rules rather than only based on individual prejudices.
9. I think Mt. SAC is a wonderful community college that really cares about its students.
10. You might consider starting on your assignment earlier to avoid procrastination.

□ 4.Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

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