

## 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup>, AND 3<sup>RD</sup> PERSON POINT OF VIEW

### WHY DO THE PERSONS MATTER?

Writing in the different persons effects how the readers perceives the author's argument. In academic writing, arguments are based on facts and evidence that have been researched. When an author uses pronouns such as *I*, *me* or *we*, their own opinion is inserted into the argument, affecting their own credibility by inserting bias into the paper.

### FIRST PERSON:

- First person pronouns include words like *I*, *me*, *we*, *ours* and *us*
- These words imply you as the writer are in the piece in some way, whether that is through experience, bias or personal narrative
- Can affect credibility if used in the wrong context
- Only use if it is proper for the type of paper or if your professor directs you to use them

### SECOND PERSON:

- Second person pronouns include *you* and *your*
- These words involve the reader in the piece in some way. Whenever the author uses one of these words, they are directly addressing the reader
- This is not always a bad technique in writing, but it is not usually acceptable in formal writing
- Sometimes it does not make sense in the context to address the reader:

**Text:** "When you have cancer, you often will feel many emotions."

**Reader:** "What do you mean when I have cancer? They act like I am going to get cancer and that this exact thing will happen to me."

- Notice how the direct address influences the reader's perception of the author and text
- Try to avoid the second person pronouns unless directed by your professor to use them

### THIRD PERSON

- Third person pronouns include words like *they*, *them*, *their*
- These pronouns are always acceptable in academic writer
- They do not involve the writer or the reader directly; thus they are more formal

(Continued on reverse side)

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Additional online resources can be found at [www.madonna.edu/owl](http://www.madonna.edu/owl)

## FIXING ERRORS

Sometimes it is difficult to fix errors in pronoun use. Below are examples that use first and second person, and examples of how to change these to the third person. Some of the changes are changed to third person pronouns; others change the sentences slightly to avoid the first and second person. Look for both in the passage below.

First and second person:

I am concerned about the rising amount of pollution in the air. If **you** look at the amount of pollution recorded over the past 10 years, **you** will see a spike in the data. Some individuals worry about the effects of air pollution; however, **you** need not worry if people begin to strive to take care of the environment. Perhaps if **we** advocate and bring more awareness to the public about the issue, **our** efforts will change **your** view on pollution control. You can truly make a difference and call for a change!

Academic Writing:

The rising amount of pollution in the air is concerning. Examining the amount of pollution recorded over the past 10 years shows a spike in the data. Some individuals worry about the effects of air pollution; however, **they** need not worry if people begin to strive to take care of the environment. Perhaps if **people** advocate and bring more awareness to the public about the issue, **their** efforts will change **society's** view on pollution control. **One** can truly make a difference and call for a change!