

Point of View

First Person

- First person is used when the paper is being told **from the author's point of view**.
- **Word clues:** I, me, mine, my, or first person plural point of view: we, us, our
- Examples:
 - I went to the store.
 - Steve gave me a flower.
 - Mr. Johnson gave us the assignment.
 - We, the people of the United States of America, in order to...
- Unless specifically directed, **do not use first person in formal writing**.



"I'm late!"



"Who are you?"

Second Person

- Second person is used when the author of the paper **directly addresses the reader**.
- **Word Clues:** you, your
- Examples: www.yahyasoliman.com
 - When you look at the evidence, you can easily see...
 - Now you know what to do to make your classroom safer.
- In most cases, **do not use second person in any formal writing**.



"One can't believe impossible things."

Third Person

- Third person is used when **both the author and the reader are left out of the writing**.
- **Word Clues:** he, she, it, him, her, its, them, they, theirs, one, research. The study, researchers, poets in general, etc.
- Examples:
 - He looked at the building and found it safe.
 - **She loves the flowers he gives to her.**
 - **It is clear that they enjoy their work.**
 - **One does not simply walk onstage.**
 - Research indicated vanilla is the preferred ice cream flavor in America.
- Third person is the **preferred voice in academic and formal writing**.
- One simple fix for changing second person to third person is by using the word "one" instead of "we" or "you." Ex.: When one builds a team of workers who are in different generations, there can be a richness of shared knowledge. (rather than "When you build...")

Test Your Knowledge of Point of View

1. You cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles.
 - a. What point of view is this sentence from?
 - b. Can this be fixed to reflect a point of view used in academic writing?
2. Although Mark roots for the Green Bay Packers, we are still close friends.
 - a. What point of view is this sentence from?
 - b. Can this sentence be fixed? How?
3. Recent studies have shown that if Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer were to run for governor of Minnesota, he would win.
 - a. What point of view is this sentence from?
How would this be fixed to reflect a point of view used in academic writing?
4. Even though you might not enjoy doing homework, sometimes you have to do things you do not want to do.
 - a. What point of view is this sentence from?
 - b. Can this be fixed to reflect a point of view used in academic writing?

Answers

1. You cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles.
 - a. Second person www.yahyasoliman.com
 - b. Yes! “One cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles.”
2. Although Mark roots for the Green Bay Packers, we are still close friends.
 - a. First person
 - b. Depends on the context. If it is a reflective paper, first person is acceptable. If not, use “the author” and rephrase, something like this: Although Mark roots for the Green Bay Packers, he and the author remain friends.
3. Studies have shown that if Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer were to run for governor of Minnesota, he would win.
 - a. Third person.
 - b. No need to fix it; it would be acceptable in an academic paper.
4. Even though you might not enjoy doing homework, sometimes you have to do things you do not want to do.
 - a. Second person
 - b. Yes! “Although doing homework is not necessarily enjoyable, sometimes one has to do things one does not want to do.”



Reading On The Move

A Different Point of View

Stories are told through the eyes of the **narrator**. A *narrator* is the person who tells the story and from what **point of view** the story will be read. *Point of view* is the view from which the story is told.



There are four basic points of view: **first person**, **third-person limited**, **third-person omniscient**, and **third-person objective**. Let's explore these points of view:

First person point of view is when the narrator is one of the characters in the story. Through *first person point of view* we only find out what this character knows, thinks, and witnesses. You will see first person pronouns such as *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine* used in telling the story.

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Example: *I knew I shouldn't have let Pedro walk home from school alone. He's too little. He must be so scared. We've walked to and from school so many times, I thought he would know his way. Now, he's lost. I'm his big sister; I should have been more responsible!*

In this example, the narrator is Pedro's older sister. We only find out what she knows and thinks. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in first person are:

- ✓ The narrator is a character in the story.
- ✓ The narrator uses words like *I*.
- ✓ The narrator presents her thoughts and feelings, but not the thoughts and feelings of other characters.

Third-person limited point of view is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but tells the story from the viewpoint of one character. Through *third-person limited point of view* we can only find out what this character does, knows, thinks, and sees. You will see third person pronouns such as *he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them* used in telling the story.

Example: *Mrs. Thompson spotted Maria walking on the sidewalk calling out Pedro's name. She knew she shouldn't have let Pedro leave the schoolyard alone. Even though she was just his first grade teacher, Mrs. Thompson always felt a special bond with Pedro. Her heart sank. She pulled her car over and told Maria to get in; they would look for Pedro together. She noticed tears forming in Maria's eyes. She reached over and patted Maria's knee, "We will find him, Maria." She hoped that comforted Maria a little.*

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In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. The story is being told by the narrator from the viewpoint of Mrs. Thompson, Pedro's first grade teacher. As readers, we can only find out what Mrs. Thompson does, knows, thinks, and sees. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person limited are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The story focuses on the thoughts and feelings of one character.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he* or *she*.

Third-person omniscient (om-ni-shent) **point of view** is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but can see into the minds of *all* characters and can report what is said and done. Through *third-person omniscient point of view* we can find out what all the characters do, think, feel and see. You will see third-person pronouns such as *he, his, hers, it, its, they,* and *them* used in telling the story.

Example: *Mrs. Thompson watched Pedro walk away from the schoolyard alone. There was a small voice inside her that told her to stop him. "He's just a little boy. He's far too small to walk home alone," she thought.*

Pedro walked by the white picket fence that he walked by every day on his way to and from school. He stopped at the next street. "Which way do I turn?" he thought to himself. He stood there and looked up and down the street trying to remember if he needed to turn left or right. He turned right and looked desperately for something that looked familiar to him. Nothing did. He started to panic, "Where am I? Should I turn around and go back? I wish my sister was with me!"

Maria looked at her watch, again. "Where is he?" she thought, with a slight sense of panic. She began walking towards the school. "Have you seen Pedro?" she asked a neighbor as she hurried by.

In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. As readers, we are able to find out what all the characters think, feel, do, and see. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person omniscient are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The actions, thoughts, and feelings of all characters are revealed.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he* or *she*.

Third-person objective point of view is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but is an observer who can only tell what is said and done and cannot see into the minds of any of the characters in the story. Through *third-person objective point of view* we can only find out what the characters say and do. You will see third person pronouns such as *he, his, she, hers, it, its, they,* and *them* used in telling the story.

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Example: *Pedro began to cry. He stopped walking and sat down on the sidewalk. Mrs. Trewer noticed the boy as she hung her coat up on the hook next to the window. She opened the door and rushed over to him. “Are you lost, Sweetheart?” she asked. Pedro nodded and sniffed. Mrs. Trewer wiped the tears off his cheeks with the end of her scarf.*

In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. As readers, we are able to find out only what the characters do and say. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person omniscient are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The reader only finds out what is said and done.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he, she, her,* and *him*.

A quick review! Circle the correct answer for each question below.

- _____ 1. First person
- _____ 2. Third-person limited
- _____ 3. Third-person omniscient
- _____ 4. Third-person objective
- a. The narrator is not a character in the story but the reader can see into the minds of all the characters.
- b. The narrator is a character in the story but the reader can only find out what this character sees, feels, or thinks.
- c. The narrator is not a character in the story but tells the story from the viewpoint of one character.
- d. The narrator is not a character in the story and can only tell the reader what is being said and done.

Try to figure out the point of view from which each passage is written. Write your answer on the line provided.

5. Sharon took a bite out of her cream-filled donut. She chewed slowly, savoring it. She looked at Donna, pointed to her donut and said, "This is the best donut you have ever made for me."

Point of view: _____

6. I couldn't help but think something was going on. Beth was acting strange, making weird excuses why I needed to be out of the house. She had me run to the store for scissors. I knew we had scissors. When I returned to the house and walked through the door I had the biggest surprise of my life! All of my friends and family were in my house yelling "Surprise!" and "Happy birthday!"

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7. Jennifer was overjoyed. She couldn't believe he had asked her to marry him. She couldn't stop looking at the beautiful ring on her finger. It was his grandmother's ring, and now she got the honor of wearing it. She felt like the luckiest woman in the world.

Point of view: _____

8. Tina felt her cheeks get hot with embarrassment. Could she have made a mistake with their order? She was sure she wrote everything down correctly. How would she explain to her boss that she had made a mistake with the restaurant owner's order? "I am so sorry, Mr. Fortune, I will take this back and bring you the correct order. I truly apologize."

Bill saw Tina bringing a full plate of food back from Mr. Fortune's table. He smiled to himself. He knew Mr. Fortune was testing Tina. "What seems to be the problem, Tina?" he asked as she approached. "I am so sorry, Bill, I must have written down the wrong order. I hope Mr. Fortune isn't too upset," Tina answered.

Mr. Fortune watched as Tina carried his plate into the kitchen. He made eye contact with Bill and gave him a wink, as if to say, "You know the drill." Mr. Fortune didn't like tricking Tina, but he felt the best way to know the quality of his employees was to see how they handle tough situations.

Point of view: _____

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Read the story below and answer the questions that follow.

Gonzalo

By Paul Fleischman

The older you are, the younger you get when you move to the United States. They don't teach you that equation in school. Big Brain, Mr. Smoltz, my eighth grade math teacher, hasn't even heard of it. It's not in *Gateway to Algebra*. It's Garcia's Equation. I'm the Garcia.

Two years after my father and I moved here from Guatemala I could speak English. I learned it on the playground and watching TV. Don't believe what people say – cartoons make you *smart*. But my father, he worked all day in a kitchen with Mexicans and Salvadorans. His English was worse than a kindergartner's. He would only buy food at the *bodega* down the block. Outside of there he lowered his eyes and tried to get by on mumbles and smiles. He didn't want strangers to hear his mistakes. So he used me to make phone calls and to talk to the landlady and to buy things in stores where you had to use English. He got younger. I got older.

Then my younger brothers and mother and Tío Juan, her uncle, came north and joined us. Tío Juan was the oldest man in his pueblo. But there he became a little baby. He'd been a farmer, but here he couldn't work. He couldn't sit out in the plaza and talk – there *aren't* any plazas here, and if you sit out in public some gang driving by might use you for target practice. He couldn't understand TV. So he wandered around the apartment all day, in and out of rooms, talking to himself, just like a kid in diapers.

One morning he wandered outside and down the street. My mother practically fainted. He doesn't speak Spanish, just an Indian language. I finally

found him standing in front of the beauty parlor, staring through the glass at a woman with a drier on her head. He must have wondered what weird planet he'd moved to. I led him home, holding his hand, the way you would with a three-year-old. Since then I'm supposed to baby-sit him after school.

One afternoon I was watching TV, getting smart on *The Brady Bunch*. Suddenly I looked up. He was gone. I checked the halls on all five floors of the apartment house. I ran to the street. He wasn't in the *bodega* or the pawnshop. I called his name, imagining my mother's face when she found out he'd fallen through a manhole or been run over. I turned the corner, looking for the white straw hat he always wore. Two blocks down I spotted it. I flew down the sidewalk and found him standing in front of a vacant lot, making gestures to a man with a shovel.

I took his hand, but he pulled me through the trash and into the lot. I recognized the man with the shovel – he was the janitor at my old school. He had a little garden planted. Different shades of green leaves were coming up in rows. Tío Juan was smiling and trying to tell him something. The man couldn't understand him and finally went back to digging. I turned Tío Juan around and led him home.

That night he told my mother all about it. She was the only one who could understand him. When she got home from work the next day she asked me to take him back there. I did. He studied the sun. Then the soil. He felt it, then smelled it, then actually tasted it. He chose a spot not too far from the sidewalk. Where my mother changed busses she'd gone into a store and bought him a trowel and four packets of seeds. I cleared the trash, he turned the soil. I wished we were farther from the street and I was praying that none of my friends or girlfriends or enemies saw me. Tío Juan didn't even notice people – he was totally wrapped up in the work.

He showed me exactly how far apart the rows should be and how deep. He couldn't read the words on the seed packets, but he knew from the pictures what seeds were inside. He poured them into his hand and smiled. He seemed to recognize them, like old friends. Watching him carefully sprinkling them into the troughs he'd made, I realized that I didn't know anything about growing food and that he knew everything. I stared at his busy fingers, then his eyes. They were focused, not faraway or confused. He'd changed from a baby back into a man.

Based on what you have read, circle the correct answer to each question.

- 9.** From what point of view is this story written?
- a. first person
 - b. third-person limited
 - c. third-person omniscient
 - d. third-person objective
- 10.** Who is the narrator of the story?
- a. Tío Juan
 - b. Mr. Smoltz
 - c. Gonzalo
 - d. It is not known.
- 11.** What country is the narrator from originally?
- a. Mexico
 - b. United States
 - c. Guatemala
 - d. It is not known.

- 12.** How did Gonzalo learn English?
- a.** He learned English on the playground and by watching TV.
 - b.** He learned English at school.
 - c.** He does not speak English.
 - d.** He learned English from his parents.
- 13.** How does Gonzalo feel about his father's English?
- a.** Gonzalo feels his father's English is excellent.
 - b.** Gonzalo feels his father does not need to speak English.
 - c.** Gonzalo feels his father knows enough English to get by.
 - d.** Gonzalo feels his father's English is worse than a kindergartner's.

Answer each question using complete sentences.

- 14.** In the second paragraph the author writes, "He got younger. I got older."
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What does this mean?

- 15.** The second time Tío Juan wandered out of the house, what did he discover? How did he feel about his discovery?

- 16.** How did Tío Juan know what seeds he was planting?

17. What did Gonzalo realize about Tío Juan as they began to plant seeds?

🔑 Answer Key

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. b | 8. third-person omniscient |
| 2. c | 9. a |
| 3. a | 10. c |
| 4. d | 11. c |
| 5. third-person objective | 12. a |
| 6. first person | 13. d |
| 7. third-person limited | |

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14. The quote, “He got younger. I got older,” means that the role of father and son has changed. Gonzalo is now the one with more responsibility because he can speak English and communicate with other people in the community. His father does not speak English, so he relies on Gonzalo to help him get through life, much like a child relies on a parent.
15. Tío Juan discovered an empty lot where people are able to plant gardens. He is very interested in starting a garden of his own.
16. Even though Tío Juan was not able to read the labels of the seed packets, he was able to understand what seeds he had by looking at the pictures.
17. As Gonzalo watched Tío Juan prepare his garden, he realized that Tío Juan was not a helpless baby. Tío Juan was able to teach Gonzalo about planting seeds because he used to do that in Guatemala.