



Consistency: Point of View

1st Person "I" - *Narrative Essays*

2nd Person "you" - *Avoid! Replace "You" with words like "society", "people" or "one".*

3rd Person "He/She" - *Professional & Formal essays (i.e. argumentative)*

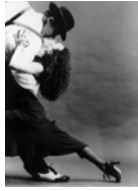


Now let's look at point of view. Point of view refers to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person.

-1st person can be used 100% of the time when you write a narrative essay. It's appropriate in narrative essays because you're narrating your own personal experiences.

-2nd person refers to the single pronoun you. 2nd person should be avoided in almost all essays. The only time 2nd person is appropriate is when you write a letter.

-Now let's look at 3rd person. 3rd person is the primary type of pronoun you should use in professional and formal essays. When it comes to professional and formal essays, stick to the 3rd person point of view. Now, there is some debate among academic teachers on whether or not students should be allowed to use 1st person in formal essays. Some professors think it's okay for you to use 1st person, while others feel that you should never use 1st person in formal essays. As an English professor, I DO feel that it CAN be appropriate for you to use 1st person in formal essays. But you need to do this very carefully; we'll discuss this in the next slide. Just remember, when in doubt always use 3rd person in formal essays.



Using 1st & 3rd Person in FORMAL ESSAYS: *The Tango of the “I”*



Love it: Make good decisions (*i.e. when giving a specific personal example, in anecdote in an intro, personal narrative essay*)

Hate it: Step back, be objective (*i.e. move from specific experience to analysis in 3rd person, “I think”, “I believe”*)

Example: However, as a person born in Puerto Rico **I have enjoyed** many of the benefits commonwealth citizens enjoy. One of the most important benefits **I’m grateful for** is the right to American citizenship upon birth. If Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth, this is a benefit that future generations will continue to enjoy. But benefits such as these still do not amount to the larger benefit independency would bring, the benefit for **Puerto Ricans** to govern **themselves**.



If you’ve ever seen any ballroom dancing, you might have seen the tango! It’s a beautiful, romantic dance where part of the time, the couples dance in passionate embrace, but then mid-way through the dance, the woman is flung away from her partner in what seems to be passionate rejection. I’m sure my description of the Tango is inaccurate, but the image serves as an analogy of the use of the word “I”.

It is a myth that the pronoun “I” should **never** be used in an essay; on the contrary, many of our best essays have used first person. However, some of your former teachers may have discouraged the use of 1st person for a good reason: Writing in the first person often produces too many empty phrases such as “I think that” and “I believe that.” Like in the tango, these are moments where you should fling the “I” away from your essay, in rejection.

Nevertheless, the 1st person point of view can be appropriate in essays. In a personal narrative, for example, you can embrace your “I” with more freedom. However, in other essays like argumentative or compare/contrast, you should tango with the “I” it carefully. Look the example in blue.

Read Example

Note how at first, the specific personal example embraces the “I” –but only for a moment. As the personal experience concludes, and the essay moves on, the “I” is flung away and replaced by the 3rd person point of view.