



COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OF RHODE ISLAND

Point of View

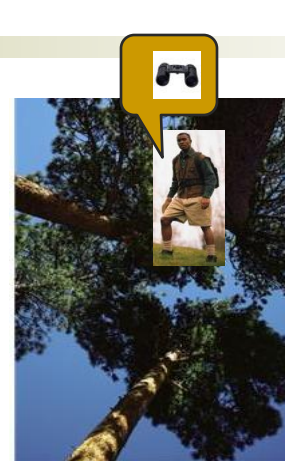
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A Definition of “Point of View”

- “Point” refers to the position from which writers or speakers “view” their audience.
- An author’s paper or speech can be analyzed to determine its point of view.



Not Just Famous Authors Use a Point of View

Everyone who writes or speaks will use a point of view, including:

- writers of essays, research papers, business letters, books, e-mails, newspaper articles, stories, poems, plays, films, literature reaction papers, and Web site content
- speakers who give presentations in classes, at work, or in other situations



Pronoun Analysis to Identify a Point of View

To determine a point of view, people can analyze all of the pronouns, especially in the introduction and conclusion of a communication.

Pronouns in lead-in phrases

can be analyzed to identify the author's point of view.

Pronouns inside of quotation marks

are often seen in dialogue and in quotations from research sources. These pronouns do not directly indicate the author's point of view.

→ **He** said, "**I** feel that **you** are a great friend to have."

Three Different Points of View



First Person
Point of View



Second Person
Point of View



Third Person
Point of View

First Person Point of View

The 1st person point of view is often used:

- when authors want to reflect on their actions, show their thought processes, or describe themselves as participants in events
- in narratives/stories
- in research papers when an author is stating his/her own view on a topic

Examples of 1st person pronouns:

I me my myself mine
we us our ourselves



I and **my** friends are learning a lot by taking notes during **our** classes.

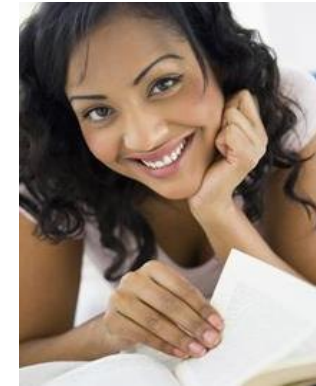
Second Person Point of View

The 2nd person point of view is often used:

- when authors want to speak directly to their audience
- in process papers and/or when giving directions
- in business documents

Examples of 2nd person pronouns:

**you your yourself
yourselves**



If **you** do extra reading for **your** classes, the information that **you** learn will help **you** to be better prepared.

Third Person Point of View

The 3rd person point of view is often used:

- when authors want to appear objective, to hide themselves, and/or to distance themselves from their audience
- in most academic papers
- in many formal communications

Examples of 3rd person pronouns:

**he she it they him her his
hers its itself them their
themselves one anybody all**



At the end of the semester, **all** of the students had completed **their** assignments on time. The professor was pleased to give **everyone** a great grade.

A Change in Point of View

Some writers/speakers switch their point of view in different sections of a communication.

Such a change can be either logical or confusing.



Logical Change in Point of View

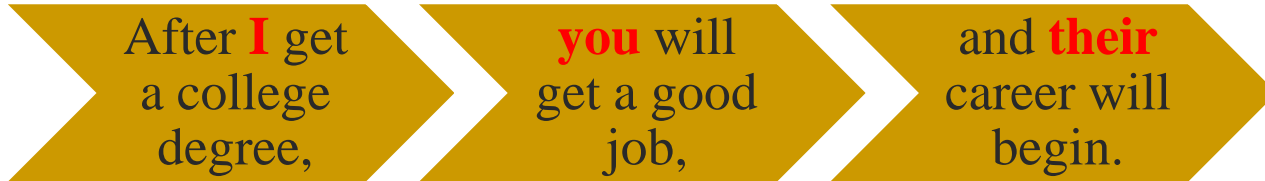
A change in point of view sometimes can be logical. For example, in research papers, writers might begin a response to a quote with a phrase including “**I**” or “**my**” to indicate a change to the writer’s own ideas:

- **My** reaction to this author’s view is . . .
- However, **I** believe that . . .
- **My** experience in a hospital shows a different possibility . . .

Confusing Change in Point of View

In an inconsistent point of view, a change is made, but there is no logical reason for the change and/or no clear transition to move the readers smoothly from one point of view to the next one.

In the following example, the idea focus should be on one person or item, but the **pronouns** refer to different people and items:

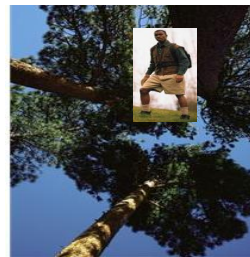


Consistent Point of View

When people view their environment, they have smooth transitions from one view to another.



People do not haphazardly jump around among different places.



Likewise, unless there is a logical reason and/or a smooth transition to a different viewing point, the point of view should be consistent throughout a communication.

Comparison of Pronouns to Check the Point of View

In order to check for a consistent point of view, people should compare each **pronoun** to other nearby **pronouns**, as well as to the **antecedents**.

Inconsistent Point of View:

- After **I** get a college degree, **you** will get a good job, and **their** career will begin.

Consistent Point of View:

- ✓ After **you** get a college degree, **you** will get a good job, and **your** career will begin.
- ✓ After a **student** gets a college degree, **he/she** will get a good job, and **his/her** career will begin.
- ✓ A **college degree** is useful; **it** can help **someone** to get a good job and a good career.



Logical Combinations of Pronouns and Points of View

Sometimes, a sentence might contain a variety of different pronouns, or a point of view might be changed with the use of transitional words, phrases, or sentences. The use of different pronouns and/or a change in point of view must be logical to the readers:

- ✓ After **I** get **my** college degree in English, **I** will have the skills needed to help **you** to revise **your** resume so that **you** can get a better job.
- ✓ After **I** get a college degree, **I** will get a good job, and then it will be **your** turn to go to college. Even though **your** college attendance will not begin until two years from now, **your** present job might give **you** some ideas that will help **you** to decide on **your** college major and future career.

Analytical Questions About Point of View

- Creating questions and then answering them can help in an analysis of one's own writing and speaking, as well as in literary analysis.
- Here are examples of analytical questions about point of view:
 - What point of view is being used? What would be the effect(s) of changing the point of view?
 - What adjectives can be used to describe the narrator and his/her stance? (ie.: biased, reliable, objective, subjective, and judgmental)
 - Where in the text, speech, literature, or other communication is the consciousness of the narrator evident? Discuss why the consciousness is present in this place—rather than in some other place—in the communication.

More Information

The Writing Center at the Community College of Rhode Island has more online resources.



Contact Information

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