

WRITING IN THIRD PERSON



Typically, in academic writing, you want to avoid using *first and second person*. Third person keeps writing objective and considers all perspectives of a topic, rather than a limited, first or second person view.

What is first/second person?

First person is when you use the pronouns **I** or **we**. It also includes the use of **our**. When using first person, you are writing from personal experience.

For example: **We** need to study more often.

Possible revision: **Students** need to study more often.

Second person is when you use the pronouns **you** or **your**. By using second person, you are informally addressing your audience.

For example: **You** must consider **your** impact on the environment.

Possible revision: **Young adults** must consider **their** impact on the environment.

Strategies for getting rid of first/second person

1. Delete “you” or “your” and *use third person or a noun*:

Many people love trying foreign restaurants where **you** can experience new food.

Revised: **Many people** love trying foreign restaurants where **they** can experience new food.

2. Delete “you” or “your” and *use an article*:

A doctor can give **you** a few tips to avoid destroying **your diet** for the day.

Revised: A doctor can give a few tips to avoid destroying **the diet** for the day.

3. Delete “you” or “your” entirely and/or *rewrite the sentence*:

The Writing Center provides many tips to **improve your writing**.

Revised: The Writing Center provides many tips to **improve writing**.

Considering your subject helps to eliminate first and second person. Ask yourself the following questions: Who/what is acting? What message are you trying to communicate in the sentence?

In academic writing, using phrases like “I think” or “I believe” can be deleted because they are redundant. Since it is your paper, it is clear that you “think” or “believe” the statement.

* Some material adapted from Langan, J. (2002). *English brushup*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
and the OWL at Purdue University.