

## **First Person vs. Second Person vs. Third Person**

When we refer to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> person in writing, we are most likely referring to the pronouns used in a sentence. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person establishes our point of view regarding the sentence. Key pronouns are bolded in the following examples:

- If we are in 1<sup>st</sup> person point of view, we are within the action.
  - Ex: **I** bent down to pet the dog, but fell on top of it instead.
- In 2<sup>nd</sup> person point of view, we are in the action and inviting the reader along as well for a shared perspective.
  - Ex: **We** found **ourselves** speeding toward the edge of the cliff, making peace with **our** makers.
  - Ex: **You** find **yourself** locked in a boiler room, chained to a wall, with a hack saw in front of **you**, just out of reach.
- In 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view we are separate, passive observers of the action or situation.
  - Ex: The unfortunate **man** found **himself** staring into the void, consumed by the terror of **his** own obsolescence.

Essentially, our person, or point of view, decides on what pronoun we use in a sentence. This is not the only determining factor, however. For most academic writing we need to remain strictly in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective. This current explanation is in 2<sup>nd</sup> person, so it would not be considered academic.

Key Concept: If using *I, Me, My*, etc., then the point of view is in 1<sup>st</sup> person. If using *You, Us, Our*, etc., then the point of view is in 2<sup>nd</sup> person. If using *He, She, It*, etc., the point of view is 3<sup>rd</sup> person.