

Being Consistent in Writing: Point of View

Point of view is the perspective from which a sentence or paragraph is written. Consistent point of view means you should use the same person or personal pronoun throughout a sentence or paragraph: first person singular (I), first person plural (we), second person singular or plural (you), third person singular (he, she, it, one) or third person plural (they). Avoid confusing shifts from one point of view to another.

Example of Confusing Shift: College students soon see that you are on your own.

In this example, the writer shifts from the third person (*students*) to the second person (*you* and *your*).

To correct this mistake, use the same personal pronoun throughout the sentence.

College students soon see that they are on their own.

OR

In college, you soon see that you are on your own.

You should also be consistent in using the right singular or plural pronoun. If the noun that the pronoun refers to is singular, use the singular pronoun for that person. If the noun is plural, use the plural pronoun.

Example of Incorrect Pronoun: A teacher should grade their papers promptly.

To correct this mistake, use a third person singular pronoun or use the plural noun.

A good teacher grades his or her papers promptly.

Good teachers grade their papers promptly.

Note: In the second corrected sentence above, the verb (grades) must be changed from singular to plural (grade) to agree with the plural subject (teachers).

Practice

Correct any inconsistencies of person in these sentences. If necessary, change the verbs to make them agree with any new subjects. Make your corrections above the lines.

his or her

Example: Each hiker should bring your own lunch.

1. Jane treats me like family when I visit her. She always makes you feel at home.
2. A student has to show their identification card in order to borrow books from the library.
3. The first person at the counter gets their order filled quickly.
4. I love to go dancing. You can exercise, work off tensions, and have fun all at the same time.
5. If a person has lived in a city, you may find the country too quiet.
6. The cast members have discovered that you have to work together to prepare for the performance.
7. A person with high blood pressure should watch their diet.
8. When Lee and I ride our bikes to work at 6 A.M., you can see the city waking up.

9. Every mechanic should make sure they have a good set of tools.

10. I gave birth to my daughter when I was only seventeen. At that age, you are still a child yourself.