

Pronouns in First Person, Second Person, and Third Person

Refer to *LB Brief handbook*, beginning page 266, concerning the use of pronouns.

A **pronoun** is a word that substitutes a noun, such as *it* (substituting for the name of a certain object) or a person, such as *he* (substituting for the name of a person).

While writing, a pronoun must always be clearly and previously identified before using it.

(Writing tip: For clarity, whenever you begin a new paragraph, ensure the pronouns are clearly identified so the reader will be reminded of what or whom you are referring.)

First, Second and Third Person Forms of Personal Pronouns

Pronouns naturally are of three persons: –

- (1) **First person**, representing the person speaking.
- (2) **Second person**, representing a person or thing spoken to.
- (3) **Third person**, standing for a person or thing spoken of.

CASE:	Subjective		Objective		Possessive	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
First Person	I	we	me	us	my mine	our ours
Second Person	you	you	you	you	your your	your yours
Third Person	he she it	they	him her it	them	his, her hers its	their theirs

Refer to *LB Brief handbook*, pg. 268, bottom, section 32d

This section discusses the incorrect use of second person *you*, which is the writer, should not use second person in collegiate work.

Writing in second person is discouraged for use in collegiate work for two reasons:

1. the essayist should not “talk” directly to the reader
2. “you” is often unidentified

Basic rules for writing in first and third person:

Write only in first person for personal narrative assignments. (Narrative assignments center around writing about yourself or a personal experience).

Write in third person for all other work, such as formal essays and research papers.

Example of how to change second person to third person pronoun (when you are not talking directly to the reader):

When *you* write college papers, *you* should not use second-person pronouns *you* or *your*.

Correct to:

When *students* write college papers, *they* should not use second-person pronouns *you* or *your*.

Example of how to change first person to third person pronoun (when you are not supposed to write about or refer to yourself):

I think Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* describe religious characters who are hypocrites.

Correct to:

Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* seem to describe religious characters who are hypocrites.