Point of View

First Person
- First person is used when the paper is being told from the author’s point of view.
- Word clues: I, me, mine, my, or first person plural point of view: we, us, our
- Examples:
  - I went to the store.
  - Steve gave me a flower.
  - Mr. Johnson gave us the assignment.
  - We, the people of the United States of America, in order to…
- Unless specifically directed, do not use first person in formal writing. “I’m late!”

Second Person
- Second person is used when the author of the paper directly addresses the reader.
- Word Clues: you, your
- Examples:
  - When you look at the evidence, you can easily see…
  - Now you know what to do to make your classroom safer.
- In most cases, do not use second person in any formal writing.

“Who are you?”

Third Person
- Third person is used when both the author and the reader are left out of the writing.
- Word Clues: he, she, it, him, her, its, them, they, theirs, one, research. The study, researchers, poets in general, ect.
- Examples:
  - He looked at the building and found it safe.
  - She loves the flowers he gives to her.
  - It is clearly seen that they enjoy their work.
  - One does not simply walk onstage.
  - Research indicated vanilla is the preferred ice cream flavor in America.
- Third person is the preferred voice in academic and formal writing.
- One simple fix for changing second person to third person is by using the word “one” instead of “you.”

“One can’t believe impossible things.”
Test Your Knowledge of Point of View

1. You cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles
   a. What point of view is this sentence from?
   b. Can this sentence be fixed? How?

2. Although Mark roots for the Green Bay Packers, we are still close friends.
   a. What point of view is this sentence from?
   b. Can this sentence be fixed? How?

3. Recent studies have shown that if Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer were to run for governor of Minnesota, he would win.
   a. What point of view is this sentence from?
   b. Can this sentence be fixed? How?

4. Even though you might not enjoy doing homework, sometimes you have to do things you do not want to do.
   a. What point of view is this sentence from?
   b. Can this sentence be fixed? How?

Answers

1. You cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles.
   a. Second person
   b. Yes! “One cannot listen to rock music without thinking of the Beatles.”

2. Although Mark roots for the Green Bay Packers, we are still close friends.
   a. First person
   b. Depends on the context of the academic paper it is written in.

3. Studies have shown that if Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer were to run for governor of Minnesota, he would win.
   a. Third person.
   b. No. It would be acceptable in an academic paper.

4. Even though you might not enjoy doing homework, sometimes you have to do things you do not want to do.
   a. Second person
   b. Yes! “Although doing homework is not necessarily enjoyable, sometimes one has to do things one does not want to do.”

Alice in Wonderland drawings courtesy of: http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/alice2a.html