

## Point of View

Deciding on the way to tell a story is almost as important as the bigger questions of plot and character development. **The voice that comes through allows readers to connect with your characters and feel engaged with the story.** For some writers, point of view comes naturally, and the perspective emerges without much thought or consideration. For others, it's a conscious choice that contributes to the overall storytelling.

There are four different types of narrative point of view. Most writers choose one and stick with it throughout the story - but there are no hard and fast rules, and it is possible to use more than one point of view within a story as long as it's clear to the reader.

Let's start by explaining the particulars:

### First Person

These are stories told in the voice of your main protagonist. What happens in the book should only ever be from his/her perspective, as this point of view is highly personal and limited to his/her experiences. These kinds of stories are always "told in the first person," which means the writer uses "I" when attributing dialogue or description.

It's an effective tool for writers working on highly personal stories or who want to limit information to the reader for narrative purposes. As long as it makes editorial sense, and the voices are separate and distinct for the reader, there can be more than one character using the first person in a story.

**Example:** *I knew the moment I walked up the steps to my new school that this year was going to be a disaster...*

### Second Person

The second person is the least-used narrative technique. It's more often a tool for educational textbooks, and instructive writing. Second person is immediately recognizable because it's always written as "you," putting the reader immediately into the heart of the story.

**Example:** *You are about to take a long and perilous journey. Do not stop to say goodbye to your family. Do not even consider speaking about this with your friends.*

### Third Person - Omniscient

**This is the most widely used narrative tool for novelists and storytellers alike.** It allows the most freedom in terms of how to tell the story, and gives the most room in terms of perspective. Essentially, the narrator sees, knows, and hears all. They are omnipresent in terms of the story.

*Example: The three girls worked up the courage to go on stage. Their first gig! They couldn't imagine a better start to the year - rocking out at summer camp, their guitars echoing all across the lake. Piper couldn't stop shaking, but Lorrie held her hand tightly while Erika grabbed the other...*

### **Third Person - Limited**

While the narrative voice is the same as third person omniscient, the perspective is often tied to one character, namely the protagonist. This allows a writer to maintain some distance to the character.

*Example: The three girls worked up the courage to go on stage. Their first gig! Piper couldn't imagine a better start to her senior year, with her two best friends beside her. She squeezed both their hands as the MC made the announcement...*

### **Tips and Tricks**

- Two different points of view should never exist within the same paragraph, and should always be separated by a structural element (whether that's an editorial or chapter break).
- Readers get easily confused if a writer slips back and forth between different points of view without a storytelling reason for doing so. Make a choice at the beginning and stick with the point of view that will best suit your story. Do you want to tell an intimate story of a highly personal nature? Use the first person. Do you want to reveal bits and pieces of the larger story as you go along, making sure your reader knows more than your characters? Third person omniscient is the way to go.
- Sometimes, if a story isn't working or feels inauthentic, the voice is the issue. Feel free to make a switch, and start telling it from a different perspective!