

## MINI LESSON: REMOVING SECOND PERSON



What do you think this woman is thinking about as she reads this sentence in her classmate’s essay?

“When you reached puberty, you probably grew hair on your chest.”

Use of second person point of view (“you”) is the culprit. The use of “you” on paper literally means “you,” the reader of this paper. This woman is thinking, “Hmm. I’m a girl. I sure hope I don’t have hair on my chest.”

There are three main points of view that writers can use: first, second, and third. Academic writing, however, requires students to write in third person point of view.

First Person Pronouns	Second Person Pronouns	Third Person Pronouns
I, we, me, us, my/mine, our/ours	you, yours	he, she, it, they, him, her, them, his, hers, its, their/theirs
Rarely appropriate for academic writing.	Never appropriate for academic writing.	Appropriate for academic writing.

Rule of Thumb for Academic Writing	Spotting Second Person
<p>For academic papers, students should eliminate the use of second (and first) person pronouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you, your, yours</li> <li>• we, us, our, ours</li> </ul> <p>Unless an instructor specifically says otherwise, assume second person is to be avoided.</p>	<p>Before submitting a paper, be sure to proofread it carefully to eliminate second person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The best way to spot second person is to print the paper and read it out loud.</li> <li>• Another way is to use the Find/Replace feature in your word processing software to search for “you*”.</li> </ul>
Reasons to Avoid Second Person	Breaking the “You” Habit
<p>There are several reasons to avoid the use of "you" in academic writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addresses the reader directly</li> <li>• Is imprecise</li> <li>• Is inaccurate</li> <li>• Shifts person</li> <li>• Is too informal</li> </ul> <p>The overall reason to avoid second person is that it causes confusion for the reader.</p>	<p>Five ways to break the "you" habit include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use nouns instead (people, students, voters, drivers, teenagers, movie goers)</li> <li>2. Use indefinite pronouns instead (everyone, someone, anything, some, most)</li> <li>3. Cut the "you" out altogether</li> <li>4. Use the word “the” instead</li> <li>5. Avoid giving commands like “Look at the statistics” or “Drive carefully.” “You” is the implied subject; instead, try “The statistics show...” or “People should drive carefully.”</li> </ol>

**PRACTICE: REMOVING SECOND PERSON**

Instructions: Change all second person to third person; make other appropriate changes to the sentences as needed.

A nurse must not only possess excellent math skills but also strong communication skills. Each day you are required to speak with doctors, patients, family members, therapists, and other nurses. You have to present yourself in a professional manner by speaking articulately. Furthermore, everything you do or say regarding a patient must be documented on a chart. Everyone who treats the patients reads this documentation. One major point all of your instructors and supervisors will stress is "If it's not written, it's not done." Patient continuity of care, treatment plans, insurance reimbursements, and the outcome of lawsuits rely heavily on nurses' notes. Every piece of information must be documented comprehensively and concisely. At times you will wonder whether all the information you have written is understandable. When you complete your communications classes, you will want to know not only how to speak effectively but also how to write clearly, accurately, and completely.

Finally, being a nurse requires not only math and communication skills but also comprehensive knowledge of anatomy and physiology. College anatomy classes will inform you about the different body organs as well as their locations and functions. Each part of the human body has a different function; however, these parts are often interdependent. If one part is not functioning properly, it will affect another. Physiology classes will teach you the functions of the parts of the body as well as what sometimes causes these parts to malfunction. In anatomy and physiology classes you will learn to recognize symptoms of certain diseases and disorders. For a nurse, recognizing a patient's symptoms can mean saving a life. Usually the first health care professional to evaluate the patient is the nurse, who then relays information about the patient to the doctor. Anatomy and physiology skills are the most important skills you will learn in college.

Exercise modified from Campbell, M.E. (1999) Focus: Writing paragraphs and essays. Prentice-Hall. p.195.