

The rooster is crowing.  
subject → verb

My friend loves dogs.  
subject verb object

## First, Second and Third Person



The 'voice' that tells us a story is referred to as the '**narrator**'.  
The story the narrator tells us is the '**narrative**'.

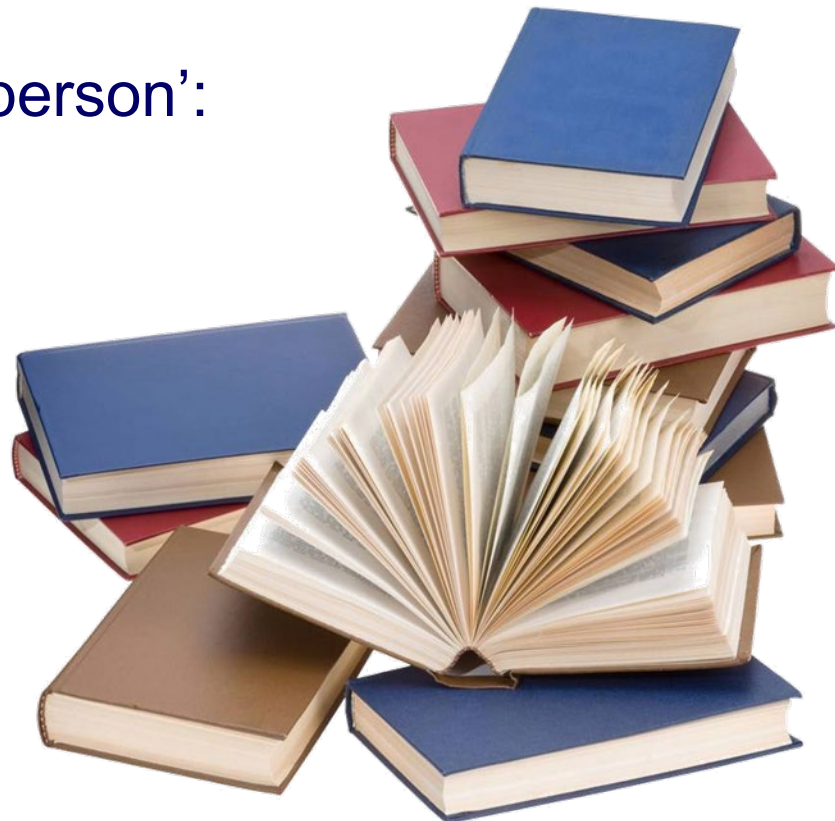
The narrative can be told from a number of different points of view, which are referred to as '**person**'.

There are three types of 'person':

**first person**

**second person**

**third person.**



**This is an extract from a story written in the first person. Can you identify the key personal pronouns that are used?**

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing continued and became more distinct. I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling but it continued and gained a definiteness – until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.



show all



In the first person narrative, the narrator is a character in the story and the story is told from his or her perspective.

The **personal pronoun 'I'** is used frequently when writing in the first person.

What other pronouns does the first person narrative use?

Can you think of an advantage and a disadvantage of writing that is in the first person?



# Second person



The personal pronoun '**you**' is used in writing in the second person narrative.

The second person narrative is not used very commonly in fictional writing.

**Why do you think this is?**

**Do you think there are any advantages of using the second person narrative?**

The second person is often used in **nonfiction writing** such as recipes, instruction manuals and advertisements.

**Why do you think this is?**



**Write a short piece of instructional text in the second person narrative voice.**

Look at this excerpt from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, written in the **third person narrative**.

Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

**What do you notice about the pronouns used?**  
**What pronouns are *not* used?**

# Third person 'omniscient'

The third person narrative uses the pronouns **he**, **she**, **it**, **they**, **him**, **her** and **them**. There are two main types of third person narrative:

**third person omniscient**

**third person limited**

The word 'omniscient' means '**having total knowledge**'. The third person omniscient narrator is 'all knowing' and can tell us about the thoughts and feelings of any character in the story. The omniscient narrator also has full knowledge of all aspects of the plot.

**Can you think of any books you have read that are written in the third person omniscient?**

**What is an advantage and a disadvantage of using this narrative voice?**



The third person limited narrator allows the reader into the thoughts and lives of only one or some of the characters, but not all. Most often such narratives tell the story from the perspective of the main character.

Third person limited narration is similar to the first person but it does not tell the story using the personal pronoun “I”.

A good example of third person limited narration is the *Harry Potter* series of novels by J.K. Rowling.

Look at a copy of a *Harry Potter* novel or another novel of your choice to find an example of third person limited narration.



**Can you think of an advantage and a disadvantage of writing in the third person limited?**

# First, second or third person?

