

Writing objectively

Being objective suggests that you are concerned about facts and are not influenced by personal feelings or biases.

Part of being objective is being fair in your work. Try to consider both sides of an argument and avoid making value judgements or using emotive language by using words such as “wonderful” or “appalling.” Being objective also makes your work more professional and credible.

Techniques for making your writing more objective

Be explicit and specific in expressing your ideas:

several	>	10
most of the population	>	70%
some time ago	>	three years ago; or in 2006

Avoid intensifiers which can tend to exaggerate your writing:

For example, “awfully,” “very,” or “really.”

Part of being objective is being fair in your work, professional and believable:

Try to avoid making value judgements through use of subjective words such as “obviously”, “amazing” or “dreadful.”

First vs. third person

Pronouns are a set of words that replace nouns. They can be used to make your work less complicated and less repetitive. Examples of pronouns include:

First person: I, we, me, us

Second person: you

Third person: he, she, it, they, him, her, them

For some assignments, it is appropriate to use the first person. However, for other assignments the third person is preferred. Sometimes a mixture of the first and third person should be used for different purposes. So, check your assignment guidelines for each assignment, as it will differ for different assignment types, different style guides, and different disciplines. If you are unsure, then check with your course coordinator.

First person preference

The first person can be used to make writing more concise when providing personal reflection, stating a position, or outlining the structure of an assignment.

Some disciplines/lecturers allow or encourage the use of first or second person (“I,” “we,” “you,” etc.). The use of the first person is also recommended/allowed in some style guides. For example, in the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (7th ed.) it is recommended that authors use the first person [to avoid ambiguity and anthropomorphism](#).

How to use the first person

The following examples illustrate some ways you can use the first person in your writing.

Examples of structuring an essay using the first person

- In this essay, I will argue that gender and ethnicity factors affect buying behaviours.
- I will argue that gender and ethnicity factors affect buying behaviours.

Example of structuring an essay without using the first person

- The essay will examine how gender and ethnicity factors affect buying behaviour.

Examples of describing research you conducted using the first person

- I found that...
- We informed participants that...

Example of describing research you conducted without using the first person

- The authors informed participants that...

Examples of describing research you conducted using the first person

- We compared...
- Our comparison of...

Example of describing research you conducted without using the first person

- The table compared...

Avoiding subjectivity using the first person

Academic training requires students to support the claims they make by providing solid arguments and/or evidence. So, even when the first person is used in academic writing it can, and usually should, still sound [objective](#).

How to sound objective using the first person when making a claim or stating an argument

The following examples illustrate ways to use the first person in your writing while sounding [objective](#) (i.e., making it clear that you are not just expressing an unsupported personal view and that you are concerned about facts and/or reasons

rather than being influenced by personal feelings or biases).

Examples of how to use the first person to sound objective when making a claim or stating an argument

- I will argue that assisting developing countries to grow crops, such as tobacco and opium poppies, is not in their best long-term interests.
- The evidence I presented above indicates that paying benefits to high school students encourages them to stay at school when they would be better off in paid employment.
- I have presented reasons why educationalists need training in observing pupil behaviour to pick up on unexpressed needs.

Examples of how not to use the first person to sound objective when making a claim or stating an argument

- I think that assisting developing countries to grow crops, such as tobacco and opium poppies, is not in their best long-term interests.
- I feel that assisting developing countries to grow crops, such as tobacco and opium poppies, is not in their best long-term interests.
- In my opinion, paying benefits to high-school students encourages them to stay at school when they would be better off in paid employment.
- I believe that paying benefits to high-school students encourages them to stay at school when they would be better off in paid employment.
- As a teacher, I believe teachers need training in observing pupil behaviour to pick up on unexpressed needs.

How to use the first person in reflective writing

[Reflective writing](#) relies on personal experience, so it is necessary to use the first person.

The following examples illustrate some ways to use the first person in [Reflective writing](#).

Examples of how to use the first person in reflective writing

- I found this experience positive...
- I witnessed...
- I succeeded in...
- I achieved my goal...
- I could have reacted differently in this situation...

Third person preference

Some disciplines/lecturers discourage the use of the first or second person (“I,” “we,” “you,” etc.) and prefer the use of the third person because it makes writing sound [objective](#).

How to avoid the first person

The following examples illustrate ways to write without using the first person.

Examples of structuring an essay avoiding the first person

- How gender and ethnicity factors affect buying behaviours will be examined.
- Careful examination of gender and ethnicity factors shows how these affect buying behaviour.

Examples of making a claim or stating an argument avoiding the first person

- Assisting developing countries to grow crops such as tobacco and opium poppies is not in their best long-term interests.
- Paying benefits to high school students encourages them to stay at school when they would be better off in paid employment.
- Educationalists need training in observing pupil behaviour to pick up on unexpressed needs.

Examples of describing research you conducted avoiding the first person

- It was found that...
- Participants in this study were informed that...

Academic writing and study skills support

1. Academic Q+A

If you have a quick question about study skills or academic writing, then they can ask it on the [Academic Q+A forum](#), which can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

2. Consultations

One-to-one consultations with learning advisors and writing consultants are [available online and on campus](#). Consultants can answer your questions about academic writing and study skills or give you feedback on your assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, presentation, use of sources, and referencing.

3. Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL)

Develop your academic writing and study skills with the [Online Writing and Learning Link \(OWLL\)](#) from Massey University. OWLL includes information on assignment writing, assignment types, referencing, study skills, and exam skills.

4. Pre-reading Service

The [Pre-reading Service](#) is a free service, which gives students s an opportunity to send their draft assignment to [CLS consultants](#) for review and advice. Students receive individual written feedback on their assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, style, presentation, referencing, and use of sources. The service can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

5. Workshops

Free study seminars and workshops are run on campus and online. See [Workshops page on OWLL](#) for [programmes and registration details](#).