

Getting into Character with Point of View.

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- How do you write a story with multiple points of view without confusing your readers?
- Which POV places the reader closer to the emotions and action?
- How do you create three-dimensional and believable characters with different camera angles?

Let's examine the three most widely accepted points of view.

1st Person POV

The most intimate is first person. Here the character in the story delivers the narration. In 1st Person POV we **feel, see, taste, hear, and think** what the narrator tells us he / she is experiencing. 1st Person POV puts the reader inside the character and close to the thoughts and feelings of the Lead.

1st Person POV Rules

- Narrator is personally involved in the story
- Camera is fixed inside the narrator's head. It never shifts
- Camera records emotions, sensations, thoughts
- Narrator cannot see his or her self except by self-reflection (mirror or memory)
- Reader bonds with the narrator
- Narrator projects his / her thoughts, opinions, philosophies onto the reader
- Narrator never dies (unless the story is told from the grave / heaven / hell)
- Narrator can only report what he / she saw, not what another character saw or felt (unless another character reports this information to the Narrator).
- No scene can be described that the narrator has not witnessed—although you can have another character tell the narrator what happened in an “off-screen scene.”

1st Person POV Tense

You can use past or present tense with first-person POV. The traditional is past tense, where the narrator looks back and tells his story. Presumably, he / she could report on things that could he / she not have perceived at the time but recalls now.

1st Person POV Present—Example

Our Camry **swerves** as we turn into Lakeview Estates. Three-story homes span the landscaping that **stretches** for acres along the lake. Families visit here every year for summer vacation. The majestic mountain peaks that outline the water of Lake Lure **offer** a refuge of seclusion to escape the stress of hectic lifestyles. No words **describe** the beauty of this place. *Purple Moon*

1st Person POV Past—Example

Death **found** me on a hot June morning in Walt Disney World's Tower of Terror. Minutes before I **heard** about the vampire in Transylvania, North Carolina, I **pulled** the seat belt across my waist and **showed** my hands to the bellhop. Behind me buckles **snapped** shut; arms **shot** up. The smiling service attendant in his maroon and gold cap **bid** us a pleasant stay at the Hollywood Hotel and **retreated** into the boiler room. Service doors **sealed** us inside, and the elevator **yanked** us up. *Skull Creek Stakeout*

Omniscient POV

Omniscient is the least intimate POV. While the omniscient narrator can roam freely and go into any character's head, that very freedom prevents the close focus on one character.

However, Omniscient POV allows for increased tension to be built into a scene since the characters in the story cannot see what the reader sees.

Omniscient POV Markets

Omniscient POV appears in the general market, or what is called the "secular market." Nicholas Sparks, Nora Roberts, Carl Hiaasen will sometimes write in Omniscient point of view.

Omniscient POV Pluses / Minuses

With omniscient POV, you are free to float above the story, describe things the characters may not see, tells the reader what's going on in any character's head or heart at any time – and within the same scene. When the omniscient narrator tells us what a character is feeling, intimacy is diminished. We do not **feel** what the character feels—we are **told** what she feels.

Omniscient POV

Seth shined the flashlight back and forth, **a sick feeling growing in his gut.**

“Do you think they’d use the same code?” Cyndi asked.

“Let’s hope.” Seth punched the code into the keypad, **heard** a click. “Yes.” He turned the latch and pushed. The door swung open. Seth reached down to the side of the doorway and pulled out a thick clump of grass. He wedged it between the door and the frame to keep the door from closing and latching shut behind him. Then he stepped inside the cage. Cyndi followed, not **happy** about going inside but not **wanting** to stay outside alone. *Insane City*, Dave Barry

3rd Person POV

In **limited 3rd person**, you stay with one character throughout the scene. You never assume another character’s POV. With **unlimited 3rd person**, you switch between characters, exploring the emotions and thoughts of multiple characters while in the same scene. The biggest risk in writing **unlimited 3rd person** is keeping the POV consistent throughout a scene: in other words, without head hopping. Once you hop heads once, you’re in Omniscient POV.

3rd Person POV Rules

- No apparent narrator
- Camera moves from head to head recording thoughts, sensations, and feelings
- Reader **must be placed into the head** of a character by the narrator

3rd Person POV Limitations

With **unlimited 3rd person** you spend less time in the head of a single character. You still have multiple major characters (2, 3 or more) but **ONLY** one main character. With **unlimited 3rd person** you spread the intimacy around.

How to Maintain & Establish 3rd Person POV

- Invite the reader into a character’s head
- Keep the invitation alive with **sensations, thoughts, emotions**
- Renew invitation **after dialogue** or **long sections of prose**
- Create a scene or chapter break when you need to switch camera angles and enter another character’s head

POV Magic Paragraph

“To signal which head to enter twang an emotion, sense or thought. Show an appropriate reaction to the emotion, sense (touch, smell, sound, sight), or thought. Repeat as frequently as necessary.” Paraphrased from *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Writing Christian Fiction*.

Magic Paragraph Example

Kate steered her Miata over the Wright Memorial Bridge, and joined the stream of tourists and locals motoring south through Nags Head. With the top down she **felt** the afternoon sun warm her face and soon found herself drumming her fingers on the steering wheel to a Zack Brown song. Kate **wished** she’d remembered to pack her bathing suit, but in a hurry to get on the road, she’d forgotten to open the bottom drawer of the dresser in the guest room. Not that it matters, she thought. I doubt I could fit into it, anyway.

Get into the head of your character and readers *may* get into your story.



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