

Point of View Explained: Writing POV Correctly Can Save Your Story

 tckpublishing.com/point-of-view

Tom Corson-Knowles

November 23, 2018

Writing in the correct point of view (POV) can make the difference between writing a blockbuster story and a complete dud.

That's because the POV you choose will determine how your reader relates to your story and characters. Reading a book with POV issues compared to a book with perfect POV is like watching a movie on your phone with one earbud that doesn't work versus watching the same movie on an IMAX screen with Dolby surround-sound.

Defining Point of View

In writing, the idea of point of view (POV) describes the narrator's position in relation to the events and action of the story.

It comes down to a matter of perspective for your narrator. Similarly to how, in a debate or argument, somebody's point of view can tell you how close they are to the subject of debate, in writing, the POV determines how close your narrator is to your story's action.

Let's break it down some...

1. First Person Point of View

Also called simply "first person," this is when the narrator is a character directly involved in the story, and relates his or her experience directly to the audience. A first-person narrator will use lots of "I" statements: "I cried," "I died," "I lied," etc.

Consider Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* as a great example of first-person fiction.

FREE COURSE: HOW TO SELL THOUSANDS OF BOOKS

Get instant access to free training videos to learn how to become a full-time author.

2. Second Person Point of View

Second person perspective describes when a story is told directly to "you": either the reader or a stand-in character somehow connected to the story. This POV is rare in fiction, but it does crop up from time to time, and it is common in nonfiction—especially in self-help books.

Second person POV is also common in blog writing because it helps you connect with your reader on a deeper level.

3. Third Person Point of View (Limited)

Here, the story is about a singular “he” or “she.” This is the most common POV in all of commercial fiction. The narrator is unnamed and anonymous, relegated to merely relating the experiences (and some of the thoughts) of the main character.

J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books are a great example of fiction written in this style.

4. Third Person Point of View (Multiple Characters)

Like limited third-person POV, this falls under the “he/she/it” category, but now the narrator follows more than one character throughout the story, switching perspectives to give readers a wider scope of the narrative. The challenge with using this kind of POV is ensuring that your readers know whose perspective you are following at all times.

Make the changeover obvious with chapter or section breaks that include the character’s name so readers know immediately whose POV they’re in as soon as that scene or chapter starts.

George R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* series is written in this style.

5. Third Person Point of View (Omniscient)

The story is about a “he,” a “she,” or sometimes even a collective “they,” but the narrator has full access to the thoughts and experiences of all the characters that appear in the story.

This POV is uncommon and difficult to pull off successfully, but can be effective in creating cinematic scope in particularly grandiose stories.

How to Pick the Right POV

If you’re not sure what kind of POV to use in your writing, consider these tips for picking the right POV.

If you’re writing commercial fiction, or writing a novel that you plan to publish, you should probably pick first person POV or third person limited POV. That’s because these are the two most common POV styles used in commercial fiction, they’re the easiest and most natural to learn, and it’s a lot harder to mess things up when you use one of these points of view in your writing.

If you’re writing your first novel or first story, I highly recommend writing in either first or third person POV because you’ll find it so much easier and faster to learn to use these POVs well in your writing.