

Point of View

Confucius once said, “In language clearness is everything.” For the next few weeks this column will give suggestions about how to make your writing more explicit. You, as the writer, know what you intend to say, but remember, the reader can only read the exact words on the page and cannot get into your head.

Many writers have problems with staying consistent in point of view: the perspective from which text is written. Often this problem is caused because the writer is intentionally trying to use inclusive language. More often though, the writer isn’t aware of the shift.

Here are two examples of shifts in points of view and how to correct or avoid them.

- “**We** thought that the exegesis was going to be fairly easy—until **we** got the first test. **You** were not only graded on specific words but how they related to the rest of the text.”

This sentence begins with the pronoun **we** (3rd person singular) but the next sentence switches to **you** (2nd person sing. or plural).

Correct this by changing the **you** to **we**.

- “**One** must study many hours everyday if **you** intend to pass Dr. ??’s class.”

First of all, who is this one person? Unless you are writing fiction, it is impossible to write about a mythical person named “one.”

Next, the sentence changes from **one** (1st person singular) to **you** (2nd person sing. or plural).

Change this to, “Students must study many hours every day of they intend to pass Dr. ??’s class.”