Avoiding Second Person

One of the main rules of writing formal, academic papers is to avoid using second person. Second person refers to the pronoun you. Formal papers should not address the reader directly. However, it can be difficult to write without second person because the word you is such a major part of our speech. Fortunately, there are ways to avoid second person without sacrificing the meaning of the text. Below are some suggestions for ways to avoid second person.

Use the Word People

- Second person: You already know that the world is round.
  - Revision: Most people already know that the world is round.

Use the Word One

- Second person: You may think this would be impossible.
  - Revision: One may think this would be impossible.

Use Someone or Somebody

- Second person: You may feel compelled to argue against this point.
  - Revision: Someone may feel compelled to argue against this point.

Remove an Unnecessary You

- Second person: You should first make sure everything is set up correctly.
  - Revision: First, make sure everything is set up correctly.

Rearrange the Sentence

- Second person: After reading this paper, you will be able to understand how a helicopter is constructed.
  - Revision: This paper will describe how a helicopter is constructed.