

# SUBJECTIVE VS. OBJECTIVE

In determining when to use the subjective or objective writing style, it is important to first understand the differences between them. A subjective tone will make reflection assignments more personal and stylistic while an objective tone will strengthen research and academic writing.

“Subjective” and “objective” refer to the writing style and to the type of information or evidence presented.

## SUBJECTIVE INFORMATION

1. **Subjective information is highly debatable** – It includes opinions and personal interpretations that are unique to each individual.
2. **It commonly uses intensifiers and strong word choice** – Especially to convey strong emotions, including *very, amazing, horrible, extremely, and barely*.
3. **It is usually written in 1st person** – When expressing your opinions and perceptions, you’ll usually write using *I, me, my, mine, myself, we, us, our, ours, and ourselves*.
4. **It is most useful for self-reflection and narrative writing** – For assignments in which you’re asked to express opinions or personal experiences, subjective writing is appropriate.

## OBJECTIVE INFORMATION

1. **Objective information relays facts without value judgments** – It avoids bias and opinion.
2. **Its wording is precise** – Rather than using words like *several* or *many*, objective writing uses concrete facts and statistics like *52 people*, or *six percent*.
3. **It is usually written in 3rd person** – Take yourself out of the conversation and only refer to the facts! One effective way to do this is through [Ghost Writing](#), i.e., integrating the authors of your sources into your writing.
4. **It is the preferred form for academic writing** – An objective tone helps build a [scholarly tone](#), which makes academic writing more formal and more persuasive.

### Subjective information

Context: You're asked to write a paragraph reflecting on a time when you overcame a challenge.

On some level, I knew it was coming—I knew that after being eligible for a decade, I would get called for jury duty at some point. This fear in the back of my mind came to fruition one evening when I got that dreaded letter in the mail. For me, the thought of jury duty was simply unappealing: dressing up, traveling out of town, and sitting in a courthouse while you wait for bureaucracy to take its course. But I took off from work, traveled early in the morning, and just as I thought, waited for hours before I was needed. Of course, I got selected to be a part of the jury, and I found out the trial was on a mere petty theft charge—boring! But after the clerk explained more about our role and we heard the case, I was intrigued and engaged. At the end of the day, I felt like I had participated in something bigger than myself. By tackling the challenge in front of me with an open mind, I walked away with a fulfilling and unforgettable experience.

Notice that this writer uses 1st person point of view and intensifying words like *unappealing*, *dreaded*, *boring*, and *unforgettable*.

### Objective information

Context: You're asked to summarize an article on jury selection.

Research offers a psychological explanation for biased jury selection. Prospective jurors may be dismissed by a “peremptory challenge,” in which they are dismissed without explanation (Sommers & Norton, 2008, p. 528). Sommers and Norton (2008) claim that “social category information,” or stereotypes, highly influence attorneys’ actions during the selection process: many believe that the jurors’ participation in the same demographic groups as the defendant will make them more sympathetic to him or her (p. 530). As well, jurors’ jobs and social status may determine how they respond to strings of facts or monetary settlements (Sommers & Norton, 2008, p. 530). Therefore, influenced by sociology and psychology, attorneys may select jurors with biased intentions.

This writer uses 3rd person point of view, presents plain facts with citations, and offers only researched-backed claims.

Sommers, S. R., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Race and jury selection: psychological perspectives on the peremptory challenge debate. *The American Psychologist*, 63(6), 527–539. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.6.527>

Writing objectively. (2018). Massey University OWLL. <https://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/writing-objectively.php>.

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