

# Audience Analysis

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We're typically not very precise when we think about audience for a communication. "This is for a general reader," we might say. Or, "This is for someone who is interested in the topic?" To be rhetorically effective we much do much better than this, and nothing is more fundamental to connecting with and persuading readers than a thoughtful audience analysis. I'd like you to consider this when you're writing about your portfolio projects in the final reflective letter.

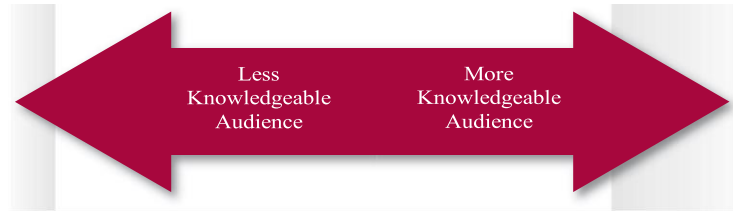
Consider analyzing your audience in the following ways:

1. **Purpose.** There are a lot of ways of talking about your purpose, and we discussed three: to **dramatize** a question/problem/idea or feeling, to **persuade** someone to take action, or to **inform** an audience who might be able to use the information. Let's add two more considerations: Do you want to encourage a **sustained** reading or an "**extractive**" reading. One is designed to keep readers engaged over time in your text. In the other, readers "dip into" it, looking for information that seems relevant or useful.
2. **Disposition.** Audience attitudes towards your topic matter a lot in how you present the material to them. Broadly speaking, audiences are already inclined to be sympathetic, they are neutral (have no feelings or are undecided), or are resistant, or already inclined to be skeptical of the case you're making. Which of these audiences you're writing for has a lot of implications for your treatment of the topic, beginning with the emphasis on ethos, logos, or pathos.

Disposition of Audience	Ethos	Pathos	Logos
<b>Resistant</b>	Most important	Less important	Most important
<b>Neutral</b>	Important	Important	Important
<b>Receptive</b>	Less important	Most important	Less important

3. **Level of Expertise.** How much do targeted audiences already know about your topic? In school writing, we often automatically assume we're writing "up" to the teacher, someone who knows more than we do about the subject we're writing about. This assumption is challenged in a class like this one, which involves writing for peers, people who probably know no more—and likely less—than you do about many topics. We've discussed in class some of the implications of the level of expertise for your treatment of the material. For example, when you're writing to experts, the rules of evidence are stricter. Your personal experiences and observations may not be persuasive. The genre conventions are stricter as well. (See below)

Ballenger: Audience Analysis  
English 112



**Essay**

**Paper**

First person (subjective) Informal structure Fewer rules of evidence No peer review May document More conversational Question-driven	Third person (objective) Formal structure Stricter rules of evidence Strong peer review Always documents More formal Thesis-driven
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