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WHAT IS “AUDIENCE” IN LAB REPORTS?

Any group of people who will read a particular piece of writing (the lab report!)

| Instructors | Classmates | President of an organization | Management company staff | Any other number of possibilities |

Writing should meet the needs or expectations of the audience in order to convey information or argue for a particular claim

Important to consider and know your audience before you start writing!

3
WHY AUDIENCE MATTERS

In general, readers of lab reports want two things:

To understand the information presented from laboratory experiment
To evaluate the legitimacy of that information

Knowing the audience will help determine the depth and the breadth your report needs to have.
WHY AUDIENCE MATTERS: DEPTH VS BREADTH

**Depth**
Refers to the extent in which specific topics are detailed and explored in the experiment
• i.e. studying the characteristics of materials, focusing on stress-strain curves

**Breadth**
Refers to the full span of knowledge of a subject studied in the experiment
• i.e. using cumulative knowledge from Materials Science to identify unknown polymers
## Identifying Your Audience

Analyze your audience(s) in order to write effectively by considering:

<table>
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<th><strong>Who</strong> they are</th>
<th><strong>What</strong> their levels of expertise are</th>
<th><strong>Why</strong> they will be reading your report</th>
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**Who** they are  
**What** their levels of expertise are  
**Why** they will be reading your report
IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE: WHO?

The audience could be an individual or group of people

Consider the technical role(s) of your audience:

- General Readers?
- Managers?
- Experts?
The audience could have varying levels of subject knowledge.

Consider their educational background(s) on your topic:

- **Very little (Novices)**
- **The basics (General Readers)**
- **Quite a bit, but not the latest (Specialists)**
- **A lot, including the latest (Experts)**
The audience could be reading for a particular purpose that is represented from the report.

Consider the context your audience will read your report:

<table>
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<th>Decision-making levels:</th>
<th>Interest in topic:</th>
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<td>Will they make a decision based on report findings?</td>
<td>How interested are your audience members?</td>
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There are 3 main categories of audiences in lab reports:

- **The “Lay” Audience**
  - *general readers with little to no knowledge of subject*

- **The “Managerial” Audience**
  - *supervisors or stakeholders that need your expertise to make a decision about the issue proposed in the report*

- **The “Experts”**
  - *academic peers, work colleagues, or scholars that know the theory and technical background involved in the report*
ADDRESSING YOUR AUDIENCES: “LAY”

• Think about technical words
• Define phrases clearly

• Explain complex concepts
• Use relatable analogies

• Be plain and straightforward
• Be consistent with lab topics

Lab reports are pieces of technical writing
ADDRESSING YOUR AUDIENCES: 
“MANAGERIAL”

**Purpose**
- Think about what the report is supposed to do
  - i.e. make a recommendation, present key results

**Content**
- Present important and relevant information
- Think about the report’s organization (sections)

**Discussion**
- Think of an inverted pyramid:
  - Start with general info and move to specific facts
**ADDRESSING YOUR AUDIENCES:**

**“EXPERTS”**

These reports are typically to *show understanding*

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<th>Conclusion</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Include technical terms and phrases</td>
<td>• Interpret and analyze your results</td>
<td>• Reference how results relates to overall purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be precise in measurable info and findings</td>
<td>• Describe experimental difficulties/improvements</td>
<td>• Make recommendations for future work</td>
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REFERENCES


