

Audience:

The Readers Of Lab Reports

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for Technical Communication

Teaching Engineers to Express Their Expertise

CONTENT COVERED IN GUIDE

What is “Audience” in Lab Reports?	3
Why Audience Matters	4
Identifying Your Audience	6
Types of Audiences	10
Addressing Your Audiences	11

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!

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:

Who they are

What their levels of expertise are

Why they will be reading your report

The audience could be an individual or group of people



Consider the technical role(s) of your audience:

General Readers?

Managers?

Experts?

**IDENTIFYING
YOUR
AUDIENCE:
WHO?**

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)*

**IDENTIFYING
YOUR
AUDIENCE:
WHAT?**

The audience could be reading for a particular purpose that is represented from the report



Consider the context your audience will read your report:

Decision-making levels:
Will they make a decision based on report findings?

Interest in topic: How interested are your audience members?

**IDENTIFYING
YOUR
AUDIENCE:
WHY?**

TYPES OF AUDIENCES

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

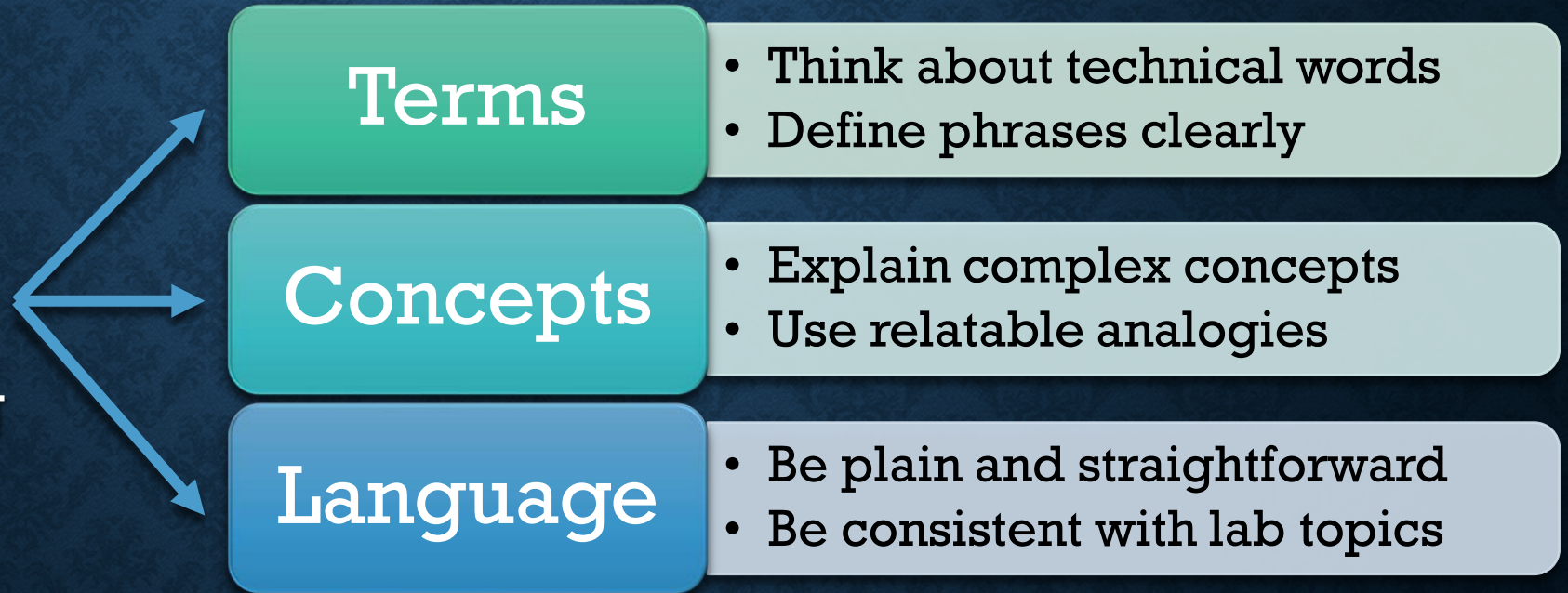
- *supervisors or stakeholders that need your expertise to make a decision about the issue proposed in the report*

The “Experts”

- *academic peers, work colleagues, or scholars that know the theory and technical background involved in the report*

ADDRESSING YOUR AUDIENCES: “LAY”

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*

Content

- Include technical terms and phrases
- Be precise in measurable info and findings

Discussion

- Interpret and analyze your results
- Describe experimental difficulties/improvements

Conclusion

- Reference how results relates to overall purpose
- Make recommendations for future work

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