

Audience Analysis

Technical writers judge their work by evaluating how effectively they achieve their purposes for a given audience. Technical writers' decisions about content, organization, formatting, style, usage, and mechanics—every aspect of a technical document—all depend on their understanding of the audience(s) for their writing. Answer the questions below to help you better understand your audience. Use your answers to guide you as you make decisions about the content, organization, formatting, style, usage and mechanics of your writing for this audience.

1. Who is your main or primary audience (or audiences)?

Are there other potential audiences as well? If so, name them.

2. What does your primary audience value in a writer? *(For example, what education or experiences does the audience expect the writer to have? What does the audience expect the writer to know?)*

3. What is your purpose in writing for this audience? *(In other words, what do you assume that the audience needs from your writing, or how do you expect the audience to use your writing?)*

4. What does your audience know or believe about your topic?

What does your audience count as valid evidence or proof? *(Personal experiences? Observation? Tests or measurements? Statistics? References to others' findings?)*

5. What kinds of writing or genres does your audience expect or accept?

What length of document does your audience expect or accept?

6. How does your audience expect information to be organized?

7. What formatting conventions does your audience expect (*for example, illustrations, headings, block-style paragraphs, bullets, charts, diagrams, a particular font type and size.*)?

8. What kind of documentation does your audience expect or accept?

9. What kind of syntax does your audience expect? (*Long or short sentences? Simple, compound, or complex sentences? Should you limit your use of adjectives or adverbs?*)

10. Is there jargon or specialized vocabulary that your audience prefers you to use or avoid?

11. What tone or attitude will your audience appreciate?

12. What are your audience's expectations for usage and mechanics? (*Should you use highly formal edited English, or will the audience expect a more casual or conversational English? Will the audience expect you to use a particular dialect? Should you use "I," "you," or "we"? Will contractions be acceptable?*)