



Know Your Audience Assignment

Introduction

Today's assignment is centered around the concept of "knowing your audience" as a central feature of effective science communication.

Whether you are communicating in written, visual, or oral form, understanding the people to whom you are communicating is key to effective translation of your science for their comprehension.

Research around a multitude of different science audiences has resulted in models including the "Sciencephiles," the "Critically Interested," and the "Passive Supporters." This exercise, though, focuses on a more broad and widely discussed model that includes these three audience types: lay, managerial, and expert. (1)

We estimate you should spend 2.5-3 hr on this assignment.

The "lay" audience has no special or expert knowledge. They connect with the human interest aspect of articles. They usually need background information; they expect more definition and description; and they may want attractive graphics or visuals.

The "managerial audience" may or may not have more knowledge than the lay audience about the subject, but they need knowledge so they can make a decision about the issue. Any background information, facts, or statistics needed to make a decision should be highlighted.

The "experts" may be the most demanding audience in terms of knowledge, presentation, and graphics or visuals. Experts are often "theorists" or "practitioners." For the "expert" audience, document formats are often elaborate and technical, style and vocabulary may be specialized or technical, source citations are reliable and up-to-date, and documentation is accurate.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the difference between lay, managerial, and expert audience types and how those types apply to diverse situations involving various science professionals.
2. Sharpen communication skills by translating a scientific paper into a brief digestible 1-page article for each audience.





Assignment

Read the article linked below and take the quick QUIZ. Then choose Scenario 1, 2, or 3 for your writing assignment. Be prepared to share your experience with your team.

[What it means to 'know your audience' when communicating about science](#)

QUIZ

Choose Your Own Writing Adventure Pick One Scenario

Scenario 1:



You're a science journalist for the New York Times during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Audience: Lay

- Students should read this [intro article](#) on communicating to a lay audience.
 - Students should read [an example of how this science paper](#) was translated to the lay public via this article.
1. In your own words, communicate [our sample article](#) to your readers in short, 1 page (approximately 500 words) article.
 2. Explain in one paragraph how you used the knowledge you learned in the '[What it means to 'know your audience' when communicating about science](#)' piece to inform your one page article. Give some examples of other lay audiences in our society.





Scenario 2:



You're a medical doctor at the CDC during the Covid-19 pandemic briefing policy makers. *Audience: Managerial*

- Students should read [this intro article](#) on communicating to a managerial audience.
- Students should read [an example of how this science paper](#) was translated to a managerial audience [via this article](#). However, please note, multiple papers found in the reference section were used to compile the summary guidance article linked above.

1. In your own words, communicate [our sample article](#) to your readers in short, 1 page (approximately 500 words) article.
2. Explain in one paragraph how you used the knowledge you learned in the [What it means to 'know your audience' when communicating about science](#) piece to inform your one page article. Give some examples of other managerial audiences in our society.

Scenario 3:



You're a researcher presenting findings at a conference on the Covid-19 pandemic. *Audience: Expert*

- Students should read [this intro article](#) on communicating to an expert audience.
- Students should read an [example of how this science paper](#) was translated to an [expert audience via this article](#).

1. In your own words, communicate [our sample article](#) to your readers in short, 1 page (approximately 500 words) article.
2. Explain in one paragraph how you used the knowledge you learned in the [What it means to 'know your audience' when communicating about science](#) piece to inform your one page article. Give some examples of other expert audiences in our

society.





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Follow-Up:

Students will be evaluated on whether they identified the correct type of audience and effectively communicated the assigned article.

Students should be ready to share their 1-page summary translations with their teams via the virtual check-in at the end of the week.

References:

<https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/from-the-staff/12-tips-for-scientists-writing-for-the-general-public>

<https://theconversation.com/what-it-means-to-know-your-audience-when-communicating-about-science-111147>

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/sciences/>



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