

Audience Analysis

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In rhetoric, one of the central concerns and requirements for successful persuasion is understanding your audience. You as a speaker or writer alone is enough for persuasion, though your rhetorical persona (also known as ethos) is an important factor. Your subject matter, content, evidence, organization, and eloquence alone are not enough for persuasion, though your rhetorical material (also known as logos) can add to or detract from your argument. The third vertex of the rhetorical triangle is the audience or your appeals to the audience (also known as pathos). When you write (or speak), you need to consider your audience's demographics, your audience's dispositions, your audience's experience with your subject, and the context in which your audience reads (or hears) your argument.

For the major paper, you will write a 1-paragraph audience analysis that briefly outlines for whom you are writing. Consider the following questions when you write your analysis (though you need not answer all of them):

1. What is the group of people you are addressing? (Consider that a group of people as those gathered for a specific purpose, issue, or event.) How will your persuasion reach this group?
2. What is your relationship to this group? (Friendly? Professional? Acquaintances? Complete strangers?)
3. What demographics (e.g. age, race, gender, class, sexuality) and communities define and shape your audience? What of these are vital to your persuasion? What of these might be obstacles to your persuasion?
4. Is your audience familiar or knowledgeable about your subject?
5. Is your audience neutral, friendly, or hostile about your subject? How might this affect how you formulate your persuasion?
6. What values does your audience have that you can work with, attend to? What values might be counter to your claims?
7. What stakes does your audience have in your subject? Why might they care? Why might they not care? And how will you establish exigence for them?
8. What kind of language will you use? What kind of terminology? What specialized terms will you need to define?