

# On the Job **WRITING**



**PREMIUM EDITION**

## *Lesson 2*

*In this lesson, you will discover how to:*

- Know your audience
- Get the demographics right
- Decide what the reader wants to know
- Determine differences in readers
- Decide on an approach

## **WHO IS READING: AUDIENCE**

After completing a one-year training program in childcare following high school, plus an internship at a daycare center, Takisha was hired as assistant to the teacher at Sunshine Place, a private kindergarten. She loves her work and believes she is cut out for a career working with children. She plans to save money and go to college for an early childhood education degree.



Today, Takisha's nerves leaped when the kindergarten director said, "*Takisha, I'd like you to write a note about Wacky Wednesday for the children to take to their parents, nannies or babysitters.*" She continued, "*Let's get them excited.*"

Then the director described why children have so much fun on Wacky Wednesday. "*On this day, kids can wear to school any combination of crazy pajamas they like. Some will wear mismatched tops and bottoms, and others will wear their favorite pjs with animals, superheroes or other prints—any creative assortment is okay.*"

Takisha wonders, "*How do I begin?*" Then she starts to think about who will read her note. "*Parents are alike in many ways. What do I know about them that will help me get started with my note?*"

## **DEFINE IT!** **Demographics**

The word "demographics" refers to the common characteristics of an individual or group of individuals. Writers use demographic information to create messages or documents that will appeal to their readers.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Readers are not all the same. They have different backgrounds, interests and levels of understanding about your subject. This is known as their demographic. They also share some things in common that make it easier to get your message across.

The more you learn about the person or people you are writing to, the easier it will be to appeal to their interests. The demographic information shown below, plus other things you learn about your readers, will help you form your message.

- Is your reader a coworker? Customer? Supervisor? Supplier? Stranger?
- If you're writing to a group of people, does it consist only of males, females or both?
- Are your readers well educated or poorly educated?
- Are they in high-income, middle-income or low-income careers?
- What is their age group?
- What is their occupation?
- What are their political beliefs?
- What is their religious affiliation?
- Are you writing to teens, senior citizens or another age group?



## GET THE DEMOGRAPHICS RIGHT

Once you know customers, coworkers, suppliers and others personally, how to interest your readers will become clearer. The writers below thought about their readers and developed a picture of the person likely to buy their products. Do you think they are right?

Genna, a jewelry maker who creates colorful necklaces, needs to write an advertisement for her website. Her necklaces are expensive because of the time and labor required to make each one. She believes her readers will be women who are motivated by unique jewelry. She thinks she should direct her writing to young and middle-aged professional women with good incomes.

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Liza, the owner of a coffee shop in the heart of a small beach town, starts to offer sandwiches

for lunch. She will create a newspaper ad to announce the new service. She believes she should direct her words to casual diners who will meet friends for lunch, vacationers who want to take food to the beach and employees of nearby businesses who desire a quick take out.



**CRITICAL  
THINKING**

*Takisha's readers in the opening story belong to a group with many characteristics and interests in common. Identify five things they have in common.*

## WHAT YOUR READER WANTS TO KNOW

When you begin a message to a reader, you may have several things you want to say. However, it's important to write about what the audience wants to know, not what you prefer to say. Many writers forget this very important point!

Imagine, for example, that you plan to write a customer about the credit he will receive for a video game he purchased by mistake from your online store. You may want to tell your reader how generous your store is to give a credit, since it has a policy against credit for video games. You may want to impress on the customer that you are granting him a special favor.

The reader only wants to know, *"When will I get my money back?"*

In Takisha's opening story, the parents will wonder what she means by Wacky Wednesday. She might start her communication with a question like this: *"What's Wacky about Wednesday?"*

Or a statement such as *"Wednesday will be wacky!"*

She could also open with *"Get your child's pajamas ready for Wacky Wednesday!"*

A sentence such as one of these can assure Takisha that parents will continue reading about what is coming up at their child's school.

## DID YOU KNOW



You can grab a reader's attention by using these techniques:

- **Ask a question.** Few people can resist trying to answer a question.
- **Make a strong opening statement.** Show how you can benefit the reader.
- **Personalize your communication.** Use the individual's name or refer to something you know is important to the person.



## LESSON 2 ACTIVITY



***Zack is an IT intern for a company he hopes will hire him full time after he graduates. He wants to send an email to someone at the company who can give advice on how and to whom he should apply, but he doesn't know anyone who works there. What job responsibilities of the employee should Zack identify to help him write to the correct reader?***

## EVERYONE IS NOT ALIKE

Identifying your reader is the most important part of writing. Knowing your audience helps you figure out what content and messages people care about.

Although messages can be written in many different ways, they should always be appropriate to the audience

who will be reading. Unless you write in a manner that motivates an individual or group to continue reading, you have wasted your time.



## ACTIVITY 2.1

***Each of the individuals below will be motivated to continue reading for different reasons, and your message will obtain a more positive response if you correctly identify the reader's motivation. What will be their motivation to read?***



You need to send an email to a printer asking for a quote on the cost of labels with your company's logo printed on them.

You want to ask your boss to pay for you to take an online course.

You would like to confirm whether a person who requested information about your product plans to purchase.

You need to contact your physician's office regarding the results of a laboratory test.

You require a programmer's assistance to correct a software problem.

## ACTIVITY 2.2



**What did the writer need to learn about the reader in Column 1 before starting to write the first sentence?**

**A New Retiree** You've earned the right to relax and enjoy the vacation of your dreams.

**A Nine-Year-Old** Bring your parents to the grand opening of STEM Toy Farms. We will have robots, coders to help you program a robot and ice cream.

**Recruiter** May I come for an interview at your convenience? My specialty skills match your requirements for the job.

## ACTIVITY 2.3

**Several writers are identified below. If you were writing to their audience, name two things you would want to know.**



1. A veterinarian plans to write an instruction sheet about the care and feeding of pets.

2. A computer salesperson plans to write a website ad about the features of the new, inexpensive computer that is on sale.

3. A park ranger is asked to write one page to distribute to visitors about the uniqueness of the park.

4. A ranch owner plans to write an article for the local newspaper to express his concern about the decreasing sale price of beef cattle.

## DECIDING ON MY APPROACH

How you approach your readers will determine how interested they are in what you have to say. A summer camp leader who wants approval to purchase new equipment would approach her supervisor differently, for example, than she would parents she is writing a letter about a new children's program.

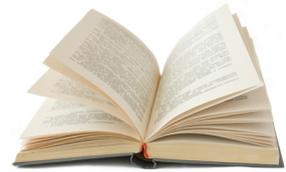
Here are some questions to ask yourself when thinking about your approach with a reader. Answers to these questions will help you know how to write.

- Am I writing to one person or a group of people?
- What is the reading ability of this person or group?
- What is important to my reader or readers?
- For what reason will the reader or readers use my document?
- How will the reader react to my message?
- What information does my reader need in order to take positive action?
- How can I decrease the possibility of a negative reaction?
- How friendly is my approach?

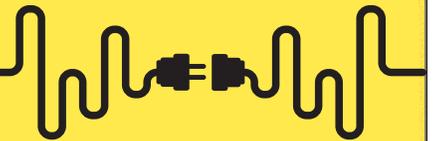
### DID YOU KNOW



Writing is just a different form of conversation in which words are visible, not audible.



## TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION



### Spellcheck Pros and Cons

Spellcheck is not a mind reader! While the software will point out common errors, it can also miss errors.

**Pro:** Spellcheck is automatic. Common errors are caught and highlighted in some way as you enter words.

**Pro:** Spellcheck is easy to use.

**Con:** It does not pick up all mistakes. If a word is not in the program's database, the program will not have anything to check.

**Con:** You become complacent. Writing can become sloppy if you rely only on spell check. Knowledge of proper word usage and spelling is essential for good writing.

## Summary for *On the Job* WRITING Lesson 2

- ✓ Readers come from different backgrounds that affect their understanding of your message.
- ✓ Identifying the demographics of your readers will help you know what to say.
- ✓ Writing about what the reader wants to know, not what you want to say, is key to a good message.
- ✓ You must motivate an individual or group to continue reading your document, or you will have wasted your time.
- ✓ How you approach readers will contribute to how interested they are in what you have to say.



## SELF ASSESSMENT

***When I think about writing for my career:***

***Usually***

***Sometimes***

***Never***

Before writing, I think about the characteristics of my reader.




When I start to write a message, I analyze what the reader will want to know.




When discussing the same matter with different groups of people, I change my approach to fit the readers' backgrounds.




I am able to write words that will motivate my audience to continue reading.




I use a spell checker, but do not rely on it totally to catch my errors.

## Reader-Centered Writing Questions to Ask

- Who is my target audience?
- Is my document going to readers within or outside my workplace?
- Will I have multiple readers?
- What is my relationship to my readers?
- What are the readers expecting to do with my document?
- What is the document meant to accomplish?
- What is my goal or purpose in writing to these readers?
- What is the goal of my readers?
- What will the readers do with this document?
- What does the reader need to know?
- What does the reader already know?
- What do I want readers to do as a result of reading this document?