

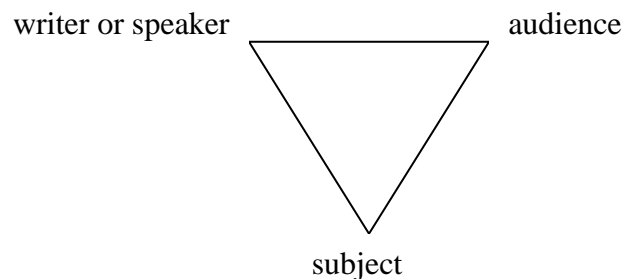


Writing and Study Skills Services – Laurier Brantford
Knowing Your Audience and Purpose: Keys to
Effective Academic Writing

- Academic writing demands that you support your ideas with evidence and reasoning.
- Different kinds of academic writing tasks will require different approaches to providing information and supporting your ideas in your papers.
- Therefore, before you get started writing, *you have to figure out who will be reading your paper and what you want to accomplish in it.*
 - In other words, **determine your audience and purpose.**

For communication to be effective, whether through speaking or writing, you must consider more than the message itself.

- As noted in *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, “the speaker and the audience are also essential components of communication” (6). This interrelation can be depicted as the rhetorical triangle:



- Faigley et al. explain that *these elements are in a dynamic relationship* and note that everybody makes adjustments to suit their audience at the time; just as audiences adjust to speakers (6-7).

It is important to know your audience:

People write and communicate differently, depending on the intended recipient.

- For example, in a personal letter to a friend, you probably use slang, jump from thought to thought, and use creative punctuation. This approach would likely be inappropriate in an essay for a professor.
- In academic writing, **knowing your audience will influence the way that you present material:**
 - **Simple audience:** If your audience has an academic background similar to yours, you can expect that they are familiar with terms and concepts that you employ.
 - **Multiple audience:** If you are writing for a more diverse audience, you need to think about presenting the material to people with differing levels of knowledge about your topic.

Knowing your purpose:

Once you have established for whom you write, **you must also determine why you write.**

- You have to decide what you want to accomplish: **this is your purpose.**
- Faigley et al. list a number of possible reasons:
 - To reflect on experience
 - To inform others about a subject
 - To change people's attitudes
 - To persuade your readers to pursue a course of action (12).
- As Faigley et al. explain, "*Your purpose will determine the tone and presentation of your message*" (12, emphasis added).
- Knowing your purpose brings focus and structure to your writing.

When you **know the purpose** for your text, you can **select the appropriate structure** and form:

1. **Rhetorical analysis** (*Brief Penguin Handbook* 83-84)
 - also called "critical analysis" or "textual analysis"
 - **examines how meaning is made by dividing a whole into its parts**
 - you consider the text from multiple perspectives
 - focus on the relationship of the text's context to the text itself
2. **Writing to inform** (*Brief Penguin Handbook* 96)
 - there are **four main functions** of informative writing:
 - a. report new information
 - b. analyze meaning, patterns, and connections
 - c. provide an explanation for something
 - d. explore questions and problems
3. **Writing to persuade** (*Brief Penguin Handbook* 111-13)
 - when you are writing to persuade, you are making an argument about your subject
 - **written arguments**
 - **are founded on evidence**
 - **explore underlying assumptions**
 - **consider opposing arguments**
 - **anticipate objections**
 - there are two types of arguments:
 - a. position argument – you state your claim about an issue
 - b. proposal argument – you suggest a course of action in response to an issue

Work Cited:

Faigley, Lester, Roger Graves and Heather Graves. *The Brief Penguin Handbook*. Canadian ed. Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2008. Print.