



WORKSHEET FOR TECHNICAL WRITING FUNDAMENTALS

Grab a few sheets of paper or use a large whiteboard for these questions. Tip: Writing out your answers by hand will stimulate your thinking better than if you were just typing them into a word file or spreadsheet.

LEARNING OUTCOME: DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR WRITING TASK

THINK ABOUT THE LAST FEW SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES YOU READ.

Make a list of purposes you had for reading those articles, with as many reasons you can think of. The purpose might have been different for different articles, but make the list to include all of the purposes you can think of.

THINK ABOUT THE MOST RECENT SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTS (PUBLICATION, THESIS CHAPTER, GRANT PROPOSAL, ETC.) YOU WROTE, OR THE NEXT ONES YOU WILL WRITE.

Make a list of purposes you had or will have for writing those documents, with as many specific purposes as you can think of.

NOW COMPARE LIST NUMBER 1 (YOUR READING PURPOSE) WITH LIST NUMBER 2 (YOUR WRITING PURPOSE).

How do the lists match each other? Assuming other readers have similar purposes as you, how will you adjust your writing or editing to keep the readers' needs in mind?



LEARNING OUTCOME: DESCRIBE THE SCOPE OF YOUR WRITING TASK

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT PURPOSE, LET'S FOCUS ON SCOPE.

Define the scope of your next scientific document, in as much detail as you can. A few prompts are: What is the main topic? What background do you need to cover? What other points do you need to make and provide references for? How deep do you need to go in explaining your materials and methods? What are your conclusions? What are your future directions? What else do you need to consider?

LEARNING OUTCOME: DESCRIBE THE AUDIENCE FOR YOUR WRITING TASK

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT PURPOSE AND SCOPE, LET'S FOCUS ON AUDIENCE.

Define the audience for your next scientific document, in as much detail as you can. If you would like, you can envision a single "ideal reader", or you may want to narrow it down to a group characterized by a range of interests and needs. A few prompts are: What does the reader do for a job, and at what type of institution or business? What is the purpose of their work? What is the topic of their work? What is their education level? Do they care about the fundamentals of your research, or do they want to apply it to their own situation? What do they already know about your topic? What background information do they need to understand your methods and results?