

Analyzing the Who, Why, and Where

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will review the importance of knowing your audience when preparing a speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Analyze Your Audience
2. Understanding Your Demographics
3. Tempering Ethnocentrism

1. Analyze Your Audience



Once you've established your topic, it's time to focus on whom you're speaking to.

Next to identifying your topic, understanding your audience is one of the most important things you can do in preparing for your speech.

2. Understanding Your Demographics

Think about your audience: what do they look like? What might they have in common? What might you have in common with them? These are important things to consider as you begin to get a sense of just who will be

sitting in front of you when you deliver your speech.

Consider the gender of your audience: male, female, or a mix? Are they older, younger? Would you consider them your peers? Have you met any of them before? Think about all the possible **demographics** of your audience, including gender, age, national origin, ethnicity, culture, and occupation.

But remember: Just because you might be speaking to one group of people, that doesn't mean you should **stereotype** that group. In fact, if you do end up stereotyping your audience, you're more likely to lose them than engage them.

Also think about the knowledge that your audience brings to your presentation. They might be extremely well-versed in or they might not have the faintest idea about your topic. The more you can tailor your speech to your audience, the more effective and persuasive your speech will be.



TERMS TO KNOW

Demographic

A demographic criterion: a characteristic used to classify people for statistical purposes, such as age, race, or gender.

Stereotype

A conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image.

3. Tempering Ethnocentrism

You should know that in any situation, you bring with you your own unique world-view and set of biases. You should especially be aware of your unique world-view and biases in your speech because they may negatively impact people of different cultures, ages, genders, etc.

The same goes for the use of gestures or mannerisms. Some everyday gestures may actually be offensive to other cultures.



EXAMPLE At any Disney theme park, all the workers, when giving directions to tourists and visitors, always point with two fingers instead of one. Pointing a single finger in some cultures is considered extremely rude.

Some idioms and expressions that may seem natural and make sense to you may actually be quite confusing to people of different cultures or languages. Try to take a step back and consider the **ethnocentric** view you may be bringing to your audience and consider ways to minimize or temper those unique perspectives so as not to alienate your audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Ethnocentrism

The tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own culture.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that it's important to **analyze your audience** when you are preparing a speech. Take into account the **demographics** of your audience: gender, age, industry, the event at which you're speaking, common interests, culture and ethnicity, and how much they already may or may not know about your speech topic. Never stereotype your audience based on any of their demographics. Be mindful of gestures, colloquialisms, idioms, or other **ethnocentric** expressions (slang, mannerisms, etc.) you might make during your speech. It's important to recognize that what is accepted in one culture may be offensive in another.

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