

Planning Papers

When planning a paper, one must consider what is called the rhetorical situation; that is, the circumstances that influence a text, namely the purpose, audience, and message. Considering the following questions will help you plan out your paper.

Purpose

What is the effect you intend to have on your audience? Are you trying to persuade them to do or think a certain way? Are you informing them of something? Are you writing to tell a story or entertain?



Target Audience

- How busy are your readers? Do you need to get straight to the point, or can you elaborate a bit more?
- Are they already interested in the topic, or do you need to "hook" their interest and keep them engaged?
- What do they already know? Do you need to explain technical terminology or give more info?



More About Audience

- What is your relationship to the reader? Do you need to be more formal, or can you be more informal, use slang, etc?
- What are their beliefs and values? Do they share the same ones as you do?
- Do they already have an opinion about the topic?



Message

- What is your main point? What should the audience take away from your paper?
- "So what?" Why should your audience care?
- What supporting details can you include to help your readers better understand your main point and why they should care?

