Who is my audience, and why are they important?

Your audience refers to the people who will read your paper. For graduate students, this typically means your professor, but if you're writing a thesis or capstone it might also include a panel of other instructors and administrators. For some assignments, you will be expected to share or present your paper with classmates. In other cases, your professor might ask you to write for a specific audience, like a budget committee or a school board.

In any case, you should ask yourself how much the audience knows about your topic. If the audience is limited to your professor, you won't need to explain some of the key terms and knowledge specific to your field. If you were writing to a general audience, however, you would need to provide more explanations and definitions. Your audience will also determine the tone and word choice in the paper. Academic audiences will expect you to *analyze* a topic and *develop* your argument, whereas general audience will expect you to *take a look* and *figure out* a solution.

How will the purpose of an assignment change my writing?

Audience and purpose are connected (Swales & Feak, 2004). When you write to an audience who knows less about the topic than you do, your aim is usually to inform or instruct (like a textbook). When your audience knows as much or more than you do about the topic, your aim is to display familiarity and expertise with the subject matter.

These two passages both introduce framing studies and the work of Robert Entman. As you read, look for how the audience and purpose shape each version.

General Audiences	Expert Audiences
It's no secret that two people can look at the same news story and make different judgements as to who is right and what should be done. Researchers in many fields have looked at what might be the cause for these differences – sociologists suggest it lies in their cultural backgrounds, psychologists point to diverse mental activity, and political scientists would probably argue audiences' reactions have more to do with which groups they identify with. In many of these fields, researchers had used the term "framing" to describe how these factors contribute to	Framing analysis is the study of texts with special attention to how the same or similar events can be portrayed differently through the decision to select, exclude, emphasize, and elaborate on different details. In his classic piece on the subject, Entman (1993) defined framing as the act of "[selecting] some aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient in a communicating text," thus promoting particular interpretations, evaluations, and treatment recommendations (p. 52). Entman's conceptual model draws from behavioral

different judgements of the same events. Robert Entman, a communication scholar, built on these ideas to develop a model for understanding mass media's role in framing news events and shaping public opinion.	psychology (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984), journalism studies (Fiske, 1987; Tuchman, 1978), and political science (Riker, 1986), but uses his own field of communication studies to synthesize each field's contributions into a cohesive research paradigm.

You probably noticed a difference in tone as you read these two introductions, with the text written for experts using more technical vocabulary and more specific background information, like citations for different studies. You also might have noticed that while the general audience text explains some key concepts before ever mentioning "framing," the expert audience text introduces it in the first sentence, then provides some complementary information from Entman. Looking closely at how Entman is introduced in each passage, we see that the general audience text explains his background and credentials before moving onto his work. The expert audience text just makes a quick comment that Entman's paper is considered a "classic piece" on the subject, displaying that the author is familiar with the topic and its most important writers.

As you write and revise your paper, keep these questions in mind: Who am I writing for? And why am I writing in the first place? Whether you're trying to explain a subject, argue a position, or just describe your research and results, remembering your audience and purpose will help you organize and focus your ideas.