



Audience Analysis

Audience analysis is a vital component of any presentation, and helps the speaker understand the situation in which they will be presenting their argument. Both before and during a presentation, you can demonstrate an awareness of your audience by conducting the following forms of analysis.

Before the Presentation:

1. **Situational Analysis**—Consider the demands of the occasion and the environment in which you will be speaking.
 - A. Determine whether your audience is required to attend your presentation, or if they are doing so voluntarily.
 - B. Consider the audience's expectations for this form of address. Examine the conventions of this genre of speech.
 - C. Determine where you will be speaking, what technology will be available, the time of day, and your place in the order of speeches.

2. **Demographic Analysis**—If possible, obtain information on your audience's demographics before your presentation. Demographic information includes age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, level of education, occupation, marital status, political orientation, etc.
 - A. Determining demographics:
 - I. Consider the event itself. A school play, for example, is ordinarily performed for parents.
 - II. If possible, distribute a survey to your potential audience. This will not always be feasible or appropriate, but it can be advantageous in specific situations.
 - III. Examine publicly accessible information, such as census data or social media accounts.
 - B. Responding to demographic data:
 - I. Resist the temptation to stereotype your audience based on demographic data. For example, do not assume that parents attending a school play are all heterosexual, middle-aged, or politically conservative. You could, however, assume that most of them are familiar with advertisements aimed at young children, children's television programming, or common parenting struggles, and incorporate those references into your presentation.
 - II. Use inclusive language, regardless of your audience's demographics, and avoid offensive language altogether.

During the Presentation:

1. **Observation**—Remain alert to the nonverbal cues of audience members, including eye contact, physical movement, and note-taking. Be prepared to adjust your volume, rate of speech, and content to better engage with your audience.
2. **Audience Response**—Polls or open response questions during a presentation can keep your audience engaged, and give you valuable feedback during your presentation.