Audience Analysis

(Adapted from A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking, 6th edition & University of Mississippi Speaking Center)

Why do I need to know who is in my audience?

By knowing who is in your audience, you can work to engage your listeners, as well as get them to become involved and buy into your message. Every person in your audience will hold different attitudes, beliefs, and/or values about your speech topic that have been shaped by each of their own life experiences. Also, you never want to use language, slang, or acronyms that are unfamiliar to the audience. Lastly, when it comes to persuasive speaking, you need to know where people stand on your issue!

What are captive and voluntary audiences?

A captive audience is someone who has been required to come and listen to you by another class, work, etc. The people in this audience did not purposefully choose to attend your speech. A voluntary audience on the other hand is made up of people who chose to come and listen to you speak. Think of your own experience, when do you listen more, when you are a captive or voluntary audience member?

Does it make a difference if my audience is captive or voluntary?

YES! If the audience is captive, you may have to work more to engage the audience, to relate your topic to them, and to get them to invest in listening to your speech. If they are voluntary, they likely already have an interest in your topic or are there in order to support you.

What is audience analysis?

This is the process of figuring out who is in your audience so you can adapt your message to them.

What do I need to figure out about my audience with the audience analysis?

You need to figure out the audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values related to your topic, as well as things such as demographics. Also remember to consider the

audience's feelings towards you as the speaker, whether or not they are captive or voluntary, and even if they are familiar with your topic or have never heard of it before.

How can I analyze my audience?
There are lots of ways to discover what your audience thinks and believes. You can conduct interviews, survey the audience, or even consult published sources (e.g. reviewing websites, articles, reports)!

So, I know who my audience is, now what?
Now you need to think through your speech. Is there any unfamiliar language that you need to define? Is there anywhere it would be helpful to give an example? Work to adapt your speech to your audience so they will best understand your message and actively engage with your speech.