

Chapter 2: Communicating in a Reader-Focused Way

Student Outcomes

By the end of Chapter 2, students will be able to do the following things:

1. Develop and use comprehensive profile of a document's readers.
2. Define and distinguish between *primary*, *secondary*, *tertiary*, and *gatekeeper* audiences.
3. Analyze documents according to a stated set of criteria.
4. Evaluate documents according to a stated set of criteria.
5. Learn to engage well in international and cross-cultural communication.

Strategies

As you will see, Chapter 2 builds upon ideas discussed in Chapter 1, especially the question of audience. In fact, audience is essentially what this chapter is about. The book takes the tack that the simple question “What’s your audience?” does not do anyone much good. Instead, writers need to define themselves, their rhetorical situation, and the several audiences for whom they write. Therefore, this chapter would be considered a success if, as a result of reading it, students ask many questions, such as, “What is the most important piece of information I need to communicate? And to whom is that information important? Why is it important to that audience, and who else might need to know that information?”

Moreover, this chapter introduces some of the analysis charts that this book uses. Rather than simply ask broad questions in a desultory way, these charts force students to write down their analyses of themselves as writers, of their audiences, and of the rhetorical audiences.

Finally, this chapter includes information on international and cross-cultural communication. Students can use this information as a starting point for understanding differences in communication around the world. As you discuss this section, ask students to contribute their own knowledge about differences in communication among cultures. Remember, though, that cultures are not monolithic and that it is difficult to make sweeping statements about what is universally appropriate within a given culture. Encourage students to approach cross-cultural technical communication situations as they would any other situation by taking the time to understand their individual audiences.

In-Class Activity: Writer Analysis, Reader Analysis, and Context Analysis Charts

Many students might be unsure of how to approach the *Writer-Centered Analysis Chart*. Though the chart seems simple enough, it asks students to think deeply about questions that they might not have considered before now. They also might need some help distinguishing between, say, values and attitudes. Moreover, they might resist the notion that facts alone are not sufficient to persuade an audience. For all these reasons, it’s a good idea to lead the class in filling out a *Writer-Centered Analysis Chart*, using a document with which you are already familiar.

The advantage of providing a document to the students is that you can choose one with which you are especially familiar. That way, you can more confidently address questions of needs, values, and attitudes. Even if you run into questions that can’t be immediately answered, you can

still point students toward the type of information they need. Moreover, you'll then have an opportunity to begin discussing research. In other words, you don't need to be an expert on salmon recovery in the state of Washington in order to use the example. All you need is access to the Internet and some basic research skills.

This same exercise can be applied both to the *Reader Analysis Chart* and the *Context Analysis Chart*. And both charts can be used again and again both throughout the chapter and the rest of the textbook. For example, these charts can be used in the sections on International and CrossCultural Communication. Finally, these assignments can easily be adapted for homework assignments and group projects.

Exercises and Projects

With regard to genres, these exercises and projects capitalize on the exercises and projects from Chapter 1. Again, the students are asked to write memos in order to report on the information they've gathered. These exercises can be adapted to some other genre in order to better meet the needs of your class. In addition to the information in the textbook, the website also provides some background on international and cross-cultural audiences. Any of the exercises and projects, then, can be easily adapted to include these audiences.

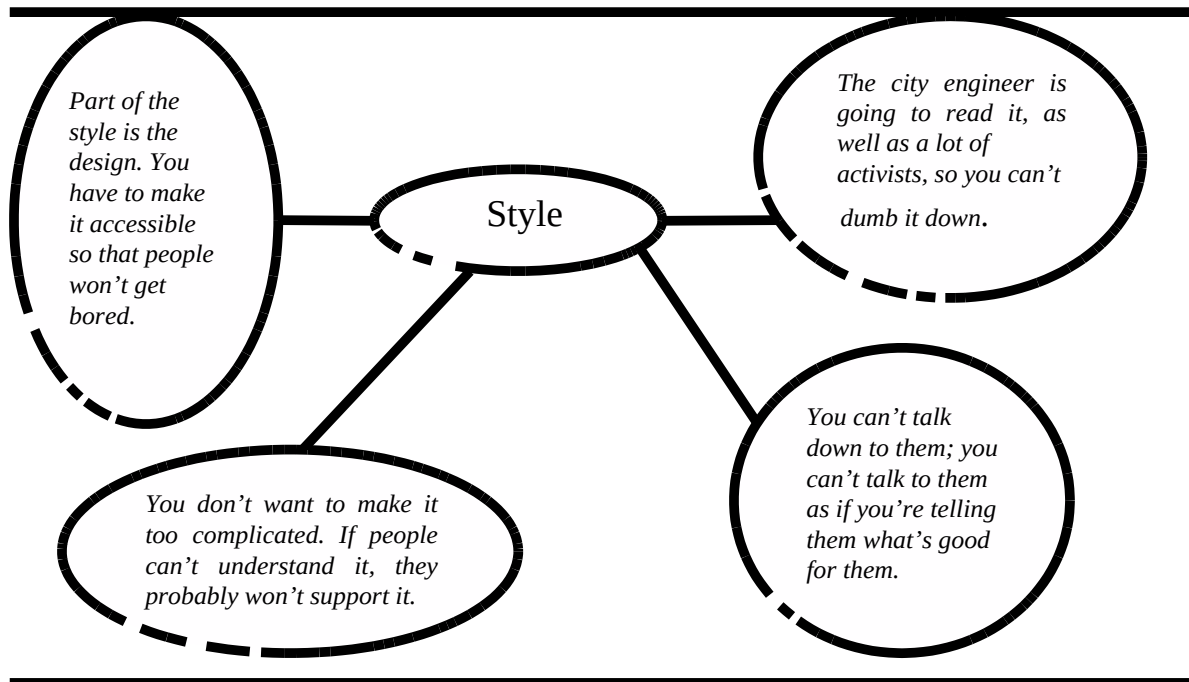
1. The first of the projects compares two websites. As you will see later in the book, there is a discussion of both the heuristic of comparison and contrast and website design. Also discussed are organization and style. In other words, students might not yet be able to perform this project with the sort of articulation that we will look for later in the semester. That's all right. The point here is to get them to see presentation and design as a series of choices, some of which might be made with good rationales and some of which might be made without good rationales.
2. This exercise also asks students to see writing as a series of choices. Here, students should look at a print document and fill out the rhetorical analysis charts provided on the website. These charts will help students begin to articulate the rhetorical situation that will become, hopefully, a habitual part of approaching a rhetorical situation.
3. Exercise three asks students to compare documents from other cultures. If you have students who are bilingual or multilingual, encourage them to look at texts written in different languages. Those who are monolingual English speakers should have no trouble finding English documents from other cultures. Consider asking them to look at a website or other document that is presented in a language that they cannot read. This move will force students to look solely at the design and to consider whether a given design does or does not meet their given expectations.

Collaborative Project

The collaborative project also looks at other countries and cultures. In addition, the *Reader Analysis Chart* and *Context Analysis Chart* provide a convenient way to think about cultural and social differences.

Case Study: Installing a Medical Waste Incinerator

The *Writer-Centered Chart*, *Context Analysis Chart*, and *Reader Analysis Chart* in the textbook are already completed. Students thus can concentrate on answering the bigger questions: How can Duane adjust the content, organization, style, and design to better write his report? If you were Duane's readers, what kinds of information would you expect in this kind of report? This conversation provides another opportunity for the instructor to do some logical mapping, perhaps something like this:



Once you've had some discussion around what Duane ought to do, consider having the students write a document that communicates and explains his decision to recommend that the waste incinerator be placed in the neighborhood. For example, perhaps Duane needs to write a memo to the City Council of Dover City. He knows that the City Council will not be the only readers of this document. The rest of the city government officials will read it, as will citizen groups, reporters, lawyers, etc. And, of course, a lot of the information he presents in the memo might be communicated only through word of mouth or through social media. Once the students have written the document, lead the students in an analysis of one or two student papers. Number two of the "Individual or Team Projects" asks students to "reverse engineer" a document in order to discern the audiences for whom the document was written. The same process can be applied to examining a piece of student writing.