

# On the Job **WRITING**



## BASIC EDITION

### Lesson 2

*In this lesson, you will discover how to:*

- Know your audience
- Get the demographics right
- Decide what the reader wants to know

## WHO IS READING

After completing a one-year training program in childcare following high school, plus an internship at a daycare center, Takisha was hired as assistant to the teacher at Sunshine Place, a private kindergarten. She loves her work and believes she is cut out for a career working with children. She plans to save money and go to college for an early childhood education degree.



Today, Takisha's nerves leaped when the kindergarten director said, "*Takisha, I'd like you to write a note about Wacky Wednesday for the children to take to their parents, nannies or babysitters.*" She continued, "*Let's get them excited.*"

Then the director described why children have so much fun on Wacky Wednesday. "*On this day, kids can wear to school any combination of crazy pajamas they like. Some will wear mismatched tops and bottoms, and others will wear their favorite pjs with animals, superheroes or other prints—any creative assortment is okay.*"

Takisha wonders, "*How do I begin?*" Then she starts to think about who will read her note. "*Parents are alike in many ways. What do I know about them that will help me get started with my note?*"

## DEFINE IT! Demographics

The word "demographics" refers to the common characteristics of an individual or group of individuals. Writers use demographic information to create messages or documents that will appeal to their readers.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Readers are not all the same. They have different backgrounds, interests and levels of understanding about your subject, known as their demographic. They also share some things in common that make it easier to get your message across.

The more you learn about the person or people you are writing, the easier it will be to appeal to their interests. The demographic information shown below, plus other things you learn about your readers, will help you form your message.

- Is your reader a coworker? Customer? Supervisor? Supplier? Stranger?
- If you're writing to a group of people, does it consist only of males, females or both?
- Are your readers well educated or poorly educated?
- Are they in high-income, middle-income or low-income careers?
- What is their occupation?
- What are their political beliefs?
- What is their religious affiliation?
- Are you writing to teens, senior citizens or another age group?

## GET THE DEMOGRAPHICS RIGHT

Once you know customers, coworkers, suppliers and others personally, how to interest your readers will become clearer. The writers below thought about their readers and developed a picture of the person likely to buy their products. Do you think they are right?

Genna, a jewelry maker who creates colorful necklaces, needs to write an advertisement for her website. Her necklaces are expensive because of the time and labor required to make each one. She believes her readers will be women who are motivated by unique jewelry. She thinks she should direct her writing to young and middle-aged professional women with good incomes.

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Liza, the owner of a coffee shop in the heart of a small beach town, starts to offer sandwiches

for lunch. She will create a newspaper ad to announce the new service. She believes she should direct her words to casual diners who will meet friends for lunch, vacationers who want to take food to the beach and employees of nearby businesses who desire a quick take out.



**CRITICAL  
THINKING**

*Takisha's readers in the opening story belong to a group with many characteristics and interests in common. Identify five things they have in common.*

## WHAT YOUR READER WANTS TO KNOW

When you begin a message to a reader, you may have several things you want to say. However, it's important to write about what the audience wants to know, not what you prefer to say. Many writers forget this very important point!

Imagine, for example, that you plan to write a customer about the credit he will receive for a video game he purchased by mistake from your online store. You may want to tell your reader how generous your store is to give a credit, since it has a policy against credit for video games. You may want to impress on the customer that you are granting him a special favor.

The reader only wants to know, *“When will I get my money back?”*

In Takisha's opening story, the parents will wonder what she means by Wacky Wednesday. She might start her communication with a question like this: *“What's Wacky about Wednesday?”*

Or a statement such as *“Wednesday will be wacky!”*

She could also open with *“Get your child's pajamas ready for Wacky Wednesday!”*

A sentence such as one of these will assure Takisha that parents will continue reading about what is coming up at their child's school.



### DID YOU KNOW?

You can grab a reader's attention by using these techniques:

- **Ask a question.** Few people can resist trying to answer a question.
- **Make a strong opening statement.** Show how you can benefit the reader.
- **Personalize your communication.** Use the individual's name or refer to something you know is important to the person.

## LESSON 2 ACTIVITY



***Zack is an IT intern for a company he hopes will hire him full time after he graduates. He wants to send an email to someone at the company who can give advice on how and to whom he should apply, but he doesn't know anyone who works there. What job responsibilities of the employee should Zack identify to help him write to the correct reader?***