# Identifying and Catering to your Audience

💡 **Main Points for Identifying & Catering to your Audience**

1. Identify the audience(s) for this research and discuss your plans with relevant stakeholders.

2. Consider what types of information may be useful to your audience.

3. Identify the best medium(s) for presenting and sharing your findings.

**Who is your audience?**

Every research project has at least one audience! These are the people or groups that you will share your results with or who may be interested in your results. Identifying your audience(s) can help guide research questions and how you present your results.

| Who are you accountable to? Who are your stakeholders? | Are there other populations who may be interested in your research? |
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| Did someone ask you to do this study? Are you a part of a class or campus group conducting this study? | Beyond the people and groups you are accountable to, are there other groups that you want to share your results with? |

💡 Whether it is a particular faculty or a campus office, it can be helpful to meet with your stakeholders to make sure your research plan meets their needs and expectations. You can also get feedback on your research questions or solicit questions from your stakeholders.

💡 Who is the population of your survey (examples: students of color, faculty, STEM majors)? Are there certain people and office on campus who serve your population? Are there ways you can include these groups in your process? Do you have a plan to share back your results?

**Reflecting your Audience in Your Research Plan**

In order for a research project to be useful to our audience(s), we have to be able to collect data and share our findings using methods that are useful and understandable. If you have multiple audiences who will be interested in your findings, consider whether your audiences have similar or competing preferences and needs. You may have to approach your various audiences using different methods.

To understand your audiences, you should consider their:

1. **Focus:** Is your audience interested in describing and understanding the issue? Are they interested in action steps and solutions?

2. **Knowledge:** How much does your audience know about the issue at hand? Are they looking to doublecheck existing knowledge or do they want to know something new?

3. **Preconceptions:**  Does your audience see the issue as important? Do they have existing narratives or viewpoints on the issue? Will they take some convincing to "get on board"? Does your audience have a solution in mind already?

Getting to know your audience, for example through meeting with them, can help direct your research in a number of ways. Consider how you might develop a survey differently on dining hall experiences for these two audiences.

💡 **Audience 1** has never conducted a survey on student transportation experiences, but have heard of some dissatisfaction from students through student feedback surveys about other areas. This audience is not sure what the major issues or successes are and is hoping to get an overview to direct future research endeavors.

💡 **Audience 2** has data from open-ended response cards that students can fill out in the dining hall. They have seen that students are most often dissatisfied with routes and hours. This audience is open to proposing some changes for next year's transportation policies and budget, but will need convincing before they commit to any changes.

You will also consider your audience when presenting your results to your audience(s). It can be helpful to think ahead of time about what preferences for information your various audience(s) want ahead of time, to ensure you have the information needed to speak to their needs and preferences.

**Information preferences:**
Different audiences value different types of information. Some audiences will strongly prefer percentages and frequencies and will get overwhelmed or bored by too much numerical information. These audiences are generally looking for results that are clearly digestible and understandable with little statistical training.

💡 **Methodological rigor** refers to the strength of one's research design, including the survey, the data collection, and the analyses.

*Some questions to reflect on or ask your audience to understand their information preferences:*

- What is your audience's level of comfort with numbers and statistics?

> Other groups, particularly those with more statistical knowledge or preexisting knowledge on the topic at hand, may want to see statistical significance and more complex analyses. These groups tend to be more concerned with **methodological rigor** of the research project and analyses.

- Do they have interest in and value direct quotes and qualitative data?

Your audience will likely also have preferences on how the results are presented to them. These preferences will depend partially on their preferences for information above, but are also constrained by time and space available for presentation of results.

**Format Preferences:** Different audiences may prefer different methods for sharing results. Some audiences will prefer visuals, graphics, and charts. Others will want to see the narrative of the research and prefer written accounts of the results. You will also want to consider how academic the results should be for your audience. Certain audiences strongly value an academic framing for results, while others may be more open to more creative ways of sharing results. You can also use a mixture of formats to present your results, for example, a written narrative can be effective at summarizing qualitative findings, whereas an infographic can effectively summarize quantitative findings.

*Some questions to reflect on or ask your audience to understand their format preferences:*

- Does your audience have a preference for lots of detail or do they want main points?

- Does your audience want your interpretation of the findings or do they want a more focused description?

- Does your audience prefer a presentation format or will they want to consume the results on their own?

*Examples of written and visual formats for presenting results*

## Written Formats

- Academic journal article

- Professional, but non-academic papers or white-papers

- Zines or creatively written formats

## Visual Formats

- Slide decks/PowerPoints

- Infographics

- Printed posters

- Dashboards (link to example)