

Things to consider when writing to your intended audience¹

- What content to include, or to exclude?
- What level of language to use?
- What writing plan to use?
- What relationship to establish with the audience?

The following texts are summaries of two different articles. The articles report on the same subject and the same experience, and are written by the same scientists. However, the scientists have greatly changed their textual presentations to appeal to different audiences: a primary and a secondary audience.

(1) The Summary Statement of “A Systematic Assessment of Early African Hominids”:

A large sample of Pliocene fossil hominid remains has been recovered from the African sites of Hadar in Ethiopia and Laetolio in Tanzania. These collections, dating approximately between 2.9 and 3.8 million years ago, constitute the earliest substantial record of the family Hominidae. This article assesses the phylogenetic relationships of the newly discovered fossil hominid and provides a taxonomy consistent with that assessment.

(2) The Summary Statement of “LUCY: A 3.5 million-year old woman shakes man’s family tree”:

The identification of a new species, ancestral to humankind, did not come easily. Donald Johanson and Tim White spent thousands of hours in painstaking detective work, poring over the superlative fossils that Johanson had unearthed in the Ethiopian desert. The two scientists knew their work would be controversial because it challenged the generally accepted family trees of *Homo sapiens*.

Questions:

1. What would be the main idea of each summary?
2. What audience might the writer(s) be responding to in Summary 1, and in Summary 2?
3. What type of source(s) the authors use to support the main idea of their summary?
4. What type of word choice and style the writers use in the summary, and how does the language differ?
5. What type of voice does the text employ? Passive voice construction usually implies a focus on what was done, whereas an active voice emphasizes the doer of the action.

¹ http://ctl.byu.edu/sites/default/files/docs/critical_reading_mini-lessons/51-Determining_An_Authors_Intended_Audience.pdf