



Scoping Your Document

*This resource document provides tips to help DHDSP recipients focus their documents—from progress reports to peer-reviewed articles—in terms of the document's purpose, audience, and length. Focusing your document appropriately helps enable your audience to use your document as you intend. This resource document aligns with the lessons and techniques in *The Writing System* (2020).*

Answer 6 Questions About Purpose and Audience:

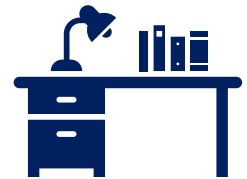
When you analyze your audience and purpose, consider answering these series of questions to help you limit the scope of your document (*The Writing System* (TWS), pages 7-22):

1. **What result do you want from your document?** Your answer is your purpose for writing. For a progress report, you might want feedback on your progress or approval to continue. For a peer-reviewed article, you might want to contribute to knowledge in your field or share your evidence-based recommendations to inform policy or health care practice (TWS pages 7-11).



2. **Who is your audience?** Your audience is the person or group of people who *use* your document. Note that not everyone who *reads* your document is your audience. If you have more than one person or group who uses your document for different purposes, answer each of the following questions separately for each (TWS pages 9, 12-13), and review the 3 options on the next page. For more information on different audience type, see page 2 of this document.

3. **How does your audience use your document?** Your answer to this question is your audience's purpose for reading. *This is your most important piece of your scoping analysis.* For a progress report, your audience might be reading to decide whether to approve or recommend changes to your approach. For a peer-reviewed article, your audience might be reading to master the subject matter or decide whether to implement your recommendations (TWS pages 14-17).



4. **What does the audience need to know?** Your answer to this question gives you your topic(s) for the document. Your audience does not need to know everything you know about the topic. Limit your topic to what the audience needs to know *to do what they need to do.* For a peer-reviewed article, your audience needs to know the overarching research question(s) being proposed and the methodological approach to generate findings. Additionally, if your audience is reading a progress report to decide whether to recommend changes to your approach, the audience needs to know what your current approach is, including any ways you changed your approach in response to your progress (TWS pages 18-19).

5. **Does the audience have a high or low level of knowledge about the topic?** In other words, does your audience need to be educated on the topic before they can use the information? If you answer “low,” you must educate your audience by providing definitions, examples, and visualizations. Your document will be two to four times longer. If you answer “high,” you do not provide this extra information, and your document will be shorter (TWS pages 20-21).



6. **Does the audience believe you or need proof?** Is your audience going to read your document and immediately question “But how do you know? And how do I know that you know?” If your audience needs proof, add supporting details, such as in-text citations, an annotated bibliography, and a thorough reference list to prove your expertise and authority, and plan for your document to be two to three times longer. Depending on the document type and dissemination outlet, you may also provide a brief biography that highlights your education and expertise on the topic. If your audience believes you, do not add this information (TWS pages 22-23).



When you answer these questions, remember that a well-scoped document **provides only the information your audience needs *to do what they need to.*** Resist providing too much information, which hinders your audience's ability to read and use your document.



Scoping Your Document

Use Audience Type to Scope and Order Your Content

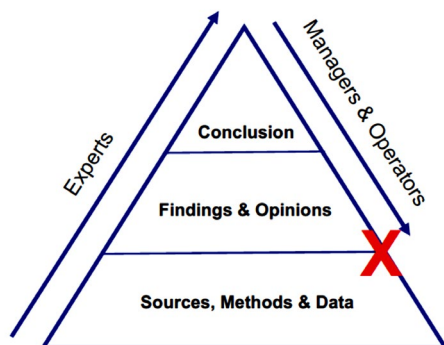
Your answer to Question 3 determines which audience type you have: expert, manager, operator, or general. See the table below for definitions of audience type and effect on content order (TWS page 12). Use your audience's purpose for reading to determine your audience type—not your audience's job title.

Audience Type	Purpose	Order of Content
Expert	Master or validate subject matter and then advise	Sources, methods, and data → Findings → Conclusions or recommendations
Manager	Make a decision or a plan	Recommendation or result → Discussion
Operator	Perform a function	Expected result → Instructions
General	Satisfy curiosity	Conclusion → Discussion

Determine How to Partition Your Document for Multiple Audiences

If you have more than one audience (see your answer to Question 2 on the first page), you must partition your document for each audience (TWS pages 24-25). You have three options:

- 1. Write separate documents.** For example, you might write a factsheet for an audience of patients who decide whether to implement your recommendations, and you might write a journal article for an audience of researchers who must master the subject matter. You report the same findings but in different ways.
- 2. Break your document into sections.** For example, you might set aside one section of a journal article as Implications for Researchers and one section as Implications for Health Care Providers.
- 3. Use front or back matter.** For example, you might write the core document for one audience and write an executive summary or an appendix for a separate audience.



This graphic (TWS page 16) can help you think through the placement of your information compared to your audience's needs. Limit the information to what your audience needs to know in a particular section of your document. Think through whether the audience for a particular section has a high level of knowledge, so you can use technical language, or a low level of knowledge, so you should define terms, give examples, draw analogies, and provide pictures. Operators will need little or no supporting data, whereas experts want data, followed by findings and conclusions. In contrast, managers want recommendations or conclusions first, then rationale with little or no supporting data.

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