

Writing For Non-Academic Audiences

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Overview

- Explain differences in academic vs non-academic publications
- Discuss strategies for effectively communicating to non-academic audiences

Non-Academic Genres

- Non-academic publications (NAPs) come in a variety of genres and formats

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- Op-eds
- Journalistic pieces
- First-person essays

Non-Academic Genres

- NAPs have different audiences

Non-Academic Genres

- NAPs have different audiences
- Start by discussing different goals of NAPs versus traditional academic articles
- Knowing goals of each genre can help us effectively communicate to new audiences

Non-Academic Genres

- Main goal of academic publication = advance a field by proposing and validating new ideas

Non-Academic Genres

- Main goal of academic publication = advance a field by proposing and validating new ideas
- Main goal of non-academic pubs = narrate advancements in a field to a non-specialized audience

Non-Academic Genres

- Academic publications create new knowledge

Non-Academic Genres

- Academic publications create new knowledge
- Non-academic publications explain new knowledge created by researchers
- This is a very important distinction

Non-Academic Genres

- NAPs are forms of public writing

Non-Academic Genres

- NAPs are forms of public writing
- Narrate the importance of new ideas as they pertain to the general public and non-specialists
- NAPs build a bridge between specialized and non-specialized communities

Non-Academic Genres

- Knowing the goal of NAPs can help us revise the writing we use in these texts
- Discuss subtle differences in academic vs non-academic writing strategies

Non-Academic Genres

- Knowing the goal of NAPs can help us revise the writing we use in these texts
- Discuss subtle differences in academic vs non-academic writing strategies
- More specifically, explain use of examples vs evidence

Examples vs Evidence

- Academic publications rely on evidence

Examples vs Evidence

- Academic publications rely on evidence
- Evidence = large or complicated sets data and information that we use to present and defend a claim
- Evidence is how we generate new ideas and validate their importance

Examples vs Evidence

- Working with evidence demands particular writing and analytical strategies

Examples vs Evidence

- Researchers are trained to rationalize limitations or biases in evidence

Examples vs Evidence

- Researchers are trained to rationalize limitations or biases in evidence
- Researchers are trained to not extrapolate ideas from isolated examples

Examples vs Evidence

- Researchers are trained to rationalize limitations or biases in evidence
- Researchers are trained to not extrapolate ideas from isolated examples
- Researchers are trained to not generalize or simplify processes in their writing

Examples vs Evidence

- NPAs do not focus on creating new ideas

Examples vs Evidence

- NPAs do not focus on creating new ideas
- NPAs focus on communicating already-validated ideas to novice audience
- This means we need to rethink our evidence-based writing strategies when composing NPAs

Examples vs Evidence

- NPAs can focus more on examples as opposed to evidence

Examples vs Evidence

- NPAs can focus more on examples as opposed to evidence
- Examples = real-world scenarios that illustrate an important idea or concept
- Examples help us demonstrate (not defend) complex ideas and claims

Examples vs Evidence

- When narrating examples, you can “bend the rules” a bit more in your writing

Examples vs Evidence

- You can write about singular examples to illustrate complex ideas

Examples vs Evidence

- You can write about singular examples to illustrate complex ideas
- You can simplify and streamline complex processes in your writing

Examples vs Evidence

- You can write about singular examples to illustrate complex ideas
- You can simplify and streamline complex processes in your writing
- You do not need the same level of citation or validation to support your claims

Examples vs Evidence

- You might analyze hundreds of data points in academic research

Examples vs Evidence

- You might analyze hundreds of data points in academic research
- You might only discuss one or two examples in NAPs
- Difference in scale/scope of your writing demands different writing strategies

Choosing the Right Example

- Not all examples are created equal

Choosing the Right Example

- Not all examples are created equal
- Some examples are more appropriate than others
- Let's review strategies for selecting a useful example

Choosing the Right Example

- Make sure the example you select is relevant to the ideas you want to convey

Choosing the Right Example

- Make sure the example you select is relevant to the ideas you want to convey
- Real-world examples are more tangible than hypothetical examples
- Real-world examples help you limit the amount of context required

Choosing the Right Example

- If you choose real-world examples, you need to decide if they are contemporary

Choosing the Right Example

- If you choose real-world examples, you need to decide if they are contemporary
- Contemporary examples can reinforce current relevance of an idea
- Historical examples can reinforce the broader scope of an idea

Choosing the Right Example

- Define all complex terminologies

Choosing the Right Example

- Define all complex terminologies
- Examples are great ways to unpack and explain complex processes
- Simplifying ideas (to a degree) for the sake of clarity is an effective strategy

Choosing the Right Example

- Lastly, be economical with your language

Choosing the Right Example

- Lastly, be economical with your language
- NAPs are usually shorter
- A single, sustained example can be enough. More than two examples might be too much

Conclusion

- The ORSSP Lab has consultants to help with both quantitative and qualitative research questions
- Webinars that discuss writing strategies
- Resources to help authors draft writing at every stage