

# Author Directions: 3 key tips to consider when determining your book audience



# Introduction

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You have determined the central idea of your book and have most likely begun your research and writing, but whilst your expertise and experiences are being put into practice as you prepare your first draft, it is still important to remember who will be reading your book once it has finally been published. Without an audience your book has no purpose; from the initial inception of your idea, to its eventual release, your intended audience should be the driving force of your writing.

Our Editors here at Routledge read hundreds of book proposals a year and will oversee the publication of dozens more in this time, with their assistance and expertise, we have identified several key points to consider when determining your book's audience.

## Your primary audience should always be considered first

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1

**"Always think about your primary audience first and foremost. It can seem like a positive feature of a book to have a very broad audience or potential readers across many fields or disciplines, but if it reaches for these readers at the expense of its core audience then that can often damage a book's prospects."**

*– Ben Piggott, Editor, Routledge*

Just as the topic on which you are writing is likely tailored particularly to your field of research, the main audience for which you are writing should be defined and always considered. There's a good chance that your primary audience will be made up of readers like yourself, those involved or interested in your field of expertise and study, so you should write with the intent of producing something that you yourself would be interested in reading. However, if your book topic veers away from your own area of research, then you will need to think broader and consider a primary audience that you may not be familiar with, so research should be done into this differing marketplace.

While several areas of research may have potentially universal or far reaching ramifications and be of a broad interest, it is not likely that your book can reach everyone. If you forget your primary audience, then your text will likely end up being unfocused and in need of multiple re-edits, which would only push the publication date further and further away, risking your primary audience moving on and your research potentially slipping into irrelevancy.

## Avoid thinking about too broad of an audience

2

**“As they say, if a book is written for everyone, it’s written for no one.”**

– Stacey Walker, Editor, Routledge

**“Be careful when claiming that a book will do well with the general reader. This is a much diminished market these days.”**

– Ben Piggott, Editor, Routledge

Similar to the last point, try not to be overly confident and think broadly when writing. As much as you hope it to be, no book is for everyone and in the field of academic writing, this is even more true, especially given that the marketplace for more general readers is not what it once was.

If you try to universalise a very specific area of research, you risk alienating the market audience of this topic by perhaps over simplifying your thesis. On the other hand, aiming for a broad audience but writing about and discussing your research as you would with a peer would be immediately off-putting to the casual reader. It is much better to write specifically for a primary audience than loosely for a broad one.

## Identify what type of book you are writing

3

**“Who are you writing for: Is your volume written for researchers and academics, or for undergraduate and graduate courses? What courses might your volume be assigned?”**

– Michelle Salyga, Editor, Routledge

Again, this point goes hand in hand with the prior directives. Whilst it is important to write with your primary audience in mind, it is equally as important to know *who* this audience is, *why* this is your audience and therefore what type of book is best for them. If your book serves to educate, then it will obviously be best suited as a textbook for students. If you intend to contribute to an ongoing field of research or comment on a current issue, then you are most likely writing for your peers, fellow academics and researchers who will be looking for intellectual stimulation and engagement. Knowing what type of book you are writing will help you to better determine your authorial voice as you write – you don’t want to be talking down to a fellow academic, or going over the head of a student.

It is also important to consider where and how your book will be used. If you are writing a textbook for students, is it a more advanced text that would be suited better for post-graduate study, or does it serve as an introductory text for foundation modules of undergraduate study? Does your book serve an already popular or common area of study, or does it have the potential to spur new studies and modules in education? Understanding this aspect of your audience is

crucial as it can help you better tailor your book to your audience, a first-year university student won't be able to fully comprehend advanced, complex ideas and studies, but a post-grad student will not want to simply revisit the content they learned within their first week of study.

## Conclusion

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To conclude, being able to accurately and effectively know and determine the audience of your book is a vitally important stage of the writing process. Without having properly discerned just who you are writing for and why you are writing the type of book you are writing, then your book will struggle to succeed and find an appropriate audience who will be engaged, stimulated and educated by your work.

Sending your work to any publishers without having considered and determined your audience means that you may likely face several rejections, as editors can easily identify gaps in your preparation. Failure to determine your audience and write accordingly is one such gap that will be immediately apparent to any experienced editor.

I hope you have found this guide helpful, be sure to read through the rest of our free Author Directions for more helpful tips and guidelines on how to achieve the best success you can.

## References

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Piggott, B. 09/05/2019. Email interview.

Walker, S. 09/05/2019. Email interview.

Salyga, M. 10/05/2019. Email Interview.

## Links

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Resources for Authors:

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