

Pre-Writing Planning

Sometimes, the best way to help strengthen your writing muscles is to do more preparation ahead of time. Consider these questions when creating your next document.

1. Who is the MAIN audience? Who is the SECONDARY audience (if applicable)?

Be specific. This is very important to return to if the document gets off track.

Tip: If you're having trouble thinking of a specific audience, start by listing who your audience is NOT.

2. In one sentence, what is the purpose of the document or content? What do you want people to do or know how to do?

This is especially important if you are working collaboratively. Each person should have the same purpose in mind. Example: *We want people to know about local ways to get a vaccine vs. We want suburban Cook County residents to know the 3 ways they can sign up for a free vaccine.*

3. What type of document are you making? Flyer? Social media post? Website content?

The type of content how much information you have room to share, where the document might be used, etc. A social media post about bird flu will have different goals, content, and amount of information compared to a blog post.

4. What's the tone?

Do you want the content to be serious? Friendly? Warm? Urgent? You might need to also consider the relationship you already have with the audience. Do they know and trust you? Or are you mostly introducing yourself to new audience members?

5. Who else needs to be part of the conversation?

Are there others that know more about the subject area that should be included in the content creation? Are there people with lived experience that would be important to involve? Are there legal or institutional rules you need to consider? For example, if Sally from the finance department is in charge of gift cards, you might need to consult her before you start offering different types of gift cards.

6. What are other questions that you might need to investigate?

Sometimes, we don't know what we don't know. Is there any additional information you could review before moving forward? For example, if you are making a flyer about testing for sexually transmitted diseases, staff with insights could include case managers, outreach team members, supervisors, etc. You can also go straight to your audience and get community members involved from the beginning. Find out what they think is needed!