

## Reading non-fiction and media: 3. Genre and audience

This audio bite is about genre and audience.

- ALIX: In the reading section you are often asked to write about genre, audience and purpose. It might be easier to remember this as G – A – P, or ‘Gap’. We’ll look at purpose later on – right now we’ll just deal with genre and audience. So what are they, and why are they important?
- ELIOT: Well there are always questions asking you to explain the sort of texts you have, and that is what genre means. You could have the same basic topic, for example karate, but you might have passages from different genres. So you could have something from an encyclopaedia – it would be full of information, like where karate started, and the different types of karate.
- ALIX: Or you could get a leaflet through your door about a local karate school. It would have far fewer facts, because it would be trying to persuade you to join the club. It would make karate sound great, but it wouldn’t tell you about any of the moves.
- ELIOT: Or you might find a book in the library about improving your karate – it would have instructions about what to do and diagrams of the different moves. But it wouldn’t tell you about your local club.
- ALIX: So the genre is the type of text. The exam often has passages which are from leaflets or books. But it can also have something from a magazine, a newspaper, a diary or an internet site. It could even have something from the back of a cereal packet – so remember to pay attention to what you see around you.
- ELIOT: And the audience is who the passage is aimed at. So you might find a simple book about karate in a primary school library – it would give young children some of the history of karate and explain what people wear when they do karate. But it wouldn’t show young children exactly how to attack someone in the playground, or how to hit someone with a rice flail.
- ALIX: But if you read an instruction manual for people who do karate – they might already be purple belts – then you’d find all sorts of things about how to defend yourself – and some of them involve breaking bones.
- ELIOT: In fact the idea of writing for a particular audience is pretty straightforward – you probably wouldn’t tell exactly the same jokes to your mum as you tell to your friends. And writers think carefully about who they are writing for too.

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ALIX: The trick in the exam is to put these ideas together – to show how a writer has chosen to write in a particular way, and for a particular group of people. You might write something like this:

ELIOT: This passage is probably for children because it's nice to look at and easy to read. For example, there is a large picture of someone dressed in karate clothes. Each bit of clothing is clearly labelled, in Japanese and in English, so the children can learn something interesting. There is also a box explaining a little about Japanese writing.

ALIX: And that's a good start – Eliot's talked about what he's found, who he thinks it's for, and why it would suit them.

So think about the genre of the passage – what sort of style is used? What does it look like? How is it put together? What sort of information can you find?

And then work out who it is for – is it for people who know a lot about the subject? Is it a set of instructions for them to follow? Are there difficult words included?