Message Fit Matters

Trace how audience and situation shape a public message.

12.P.ST.1.b "Consider how context impacts the purposes of the author and the audience. (I/C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases that identify an audience or its situation. Circle words or phrases that show what the office wants that audience to do or understand, then number the three messages 1, 2, and 3.

Smoke Messages Change

1. At 6:15 a.m., a county air-quality office learned that smoke from a nearby wildfire had pushed the Air Quality Index into the unhealthy range. Its first message appeared on transit displays: "Smoke is heavy this morning. Keep bus windows closed, limit outdoor waiting, and wear a well-fitting N95 mask if you have one." The office chose brief commands because commuters were checking signs while traveling. It did not explain the chemistry of smoke or the fire's location. The immediate purpose was to reduce exposure during the morning trip, not to provide a full public report.

2. By noon, the office sent a longer bulletin to school nurses and athletic directors. It reported the AQI category, advised them to move practices indoors, and asked them to watch students with asthma for coughing or shortness of breath. These readers could make decisions for groups of young people, so they needed details that a transit sign could not hold. The bulletin's purpose was not merely to warn. It was to support health decisions and give staff language they could share with families. Its formal tone also signaled that the recommendations came from a public agency.

3. That evening, conditions improved, but the office posted a web update for all county residents. The update explained that wind direction had changed, listed the next morning's forecast, linked to state health guidance, and invited residents to sign up for alerts. Unlike the earlier messages, it acknowledged uncertainty: smoke could return if winds shifted again. A broad audience needed context, sources, and a way to prepare for later changes. The author's purpose had expanded from directing immediate behavior to building public understanding and trust. Across the day, the same smoke event required different information, tones, and levels of detail because each audience faced a different situation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What details show why the transit message needed a different style from the midday bulletin?

2. How did the purpose of the midday bulletin differ from the purpose of the morning transit message?

3. Why did the evening web update include uncertainty, sources, and a forecast?

4. How does the formal tone of the midday bulletin fit its audience and purpose? Use one detail from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a public-safety situation different from smoke, such as a water-boil advisory, delayed train service, or heat warning. Write a 45-60-word message for one clearly identified audience, using wording and details that fit that audience's situation; add labels for the audience and purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Message Fit Matters

GRADE 12 · 12.P.ST.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that identify an audience or its situation. Circle words or phrases that show what the office wants that audience to do or understand, then number the three messages 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What details show why the transit message needed a different style from the midday bulletin?	**Commuters were checking signs while traveling, so the transit message used brief commands. Nurses and athletic directors were making decisions for groups of students, so the bulletin provided more detail.**
2	How did the purpose of the midday bulletin differ from the purpose of the morning transit message?	**The morning message aimed to reduce commuters' immediate smoke exposure. The midday bulletin aimed to support health decisions for students and give staff information to share with families.**
3	Why did the evening web update include uncertainty, sources, and a forecast?	**All county residents needed context and reliable information to prepare for possible later changes, since smoke could return if the wind shifted.**
4	How does the formal tone of the midday bulletin fit its audience and purpose? Use one detail from the passage.	**Its formal tone fits school staff who must make health decisions and communicate with families. Reporting the AQI category and recommendations from a public agency gives those decisions authority.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Audience: Eastview restaurant managers. Purpose: Prevent unsafe water use during an advisory. Boil-water advisory, 8:00 a.m.: Restaurant managers in Eastview must stop using tap water for drinks, ice, and food preparation until the health department lifts the advisory. Use bottled or previously boiled water, post the notice for staff, and check the department website at noon for test results and reopening instructions.

Accept responses that accurately connect a message's audience and circumstances to its purpose, tone, level of detail, or requested action. For Part 3, accept any 45-60-word message with a clear audience, purpose, and context-appropriate choices.