

1. just as we judge a writer as we read, so a writer must judge his readers, but before he writes.
2. We imagined a persona for you, a role we hoped you would adopt: someone interested in learning how to do and report research and who shares our belief in its importance (or at least is open to being persuaded).
3. Since few people read research reports for entertainment, you have to create a relationship that encourages them to see why it's in their interest to read yours
4. You take big a step toward more significant research when you can say to readers not just Here are some facts that should interest you, but These facts will help you do something to solve a problem you care about.
5. Others might use their findings to solve a practical problem—a discovery about the distribution of prime numbers, for example, helped cryptologists design an unbreakable code. But that research itself was aimed at solving not the practical problem of keeping secrets, but the conceptual problem of not entirely understanding prime numbers. Some researchers call this kind of research “pure” as opposed to “applied.”
6. You don't expect them to challenge the authenticity of the letter from Great- Uncle Otto or question how the photos are relevant to the social history of zeppelins, much less of lighter- than- air travel in general. Your job is to give an engaging talk; theirs is to be amiably engaged.
7. Because these lighter- than- air scholars are intensely committed to finding the Truth about zeppelins, you know they expect you to be objective, rigorously logical, able to examine every issue from all sides. You also know that if you don't nail down your facts, they'll hammer you during the question period, and if you don't have good answers, slice you up afterward over the wine and cheese, not just to be contentious or even nasty (though some will be), but to get as close as they can to the Truth about zeppelins in the 1930s.
8. You must, however, cast your readers in a complementary role by offering them a social contract: I'll play my part if you play yours. But that means you have to understand their role. If you cast them in a role they won't accept, you're likely to lose them entirely.
9. Your academic readers will almost always adopt this third role. They will think you've fulfilled your side of the social contract only when you treat them as who they think they are: scholars interested in greater knowledge and better understanding.
10. You are concerned with your particular community of readers, with their interests and expectations, with improving their understanding, based on the best evidence you can find. That's the social contract that all researchers must establish with their readers.