

Exercise walk-through

Components of the rhetorical situation ■ 7.1

eXercise

You must be able to

- explain how audience expertise affects how strongly a claim is stated
- explain how purpose affects the amount of qualification used
- link a hedge or an absolute claim to the situation
- avoid treating qualification as weakness

Method — Expertise and certainty

An expert audience expects claims stated with their real strength; overstatement is noticed and costs standing. A general audience may read qualification as uncertainty, so writers often state more plainly and qualify in a following sentence.

Method — Purpose and hedging

A writer seeking a decision states plainly; one seeking a hearing for an unwelcome view qualifies heavily so the reader will keep reading. Both are strategy, not timidity.

Method — Linking to the situation

“He qualifies because his audience are specialists who will check” is analysis. “He qualifies because he is unsure” is a guess about a person we cannot observe.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State how audience expertise affects the strength of a stated claim.

Solution 2.1

Method: Expertise and certainty

Worked steps

experts expect claims at their real strength **B1**; overstatement is noticed and costs the writer standing **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain why heavy qualification may serve a writer's purpose.

Solution 2.2

Method: Purpose and hedging

Worked steps

it keeps a hostile or unconvinced reader reading **B1** rather than rejecting the claim at the first sentence **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A writer addressing a general readership states a claim plainly and qualifies it in the next sentence.

- (a) State the reason.
- (b) State what would be lost by qualifying inside the first sentence.

Solution 2.3

Method: Purpose and hedging

Worked steps

- (a) a general reader may read qualification as uncertainty, so the claim lands first **B1**. (b) the claim's force, since the qualification would blunt it before it registers **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Overstatement before an expert audience mainly costs the writer

- A** length
- B** standing
- C** coherence
- D** unity

Solution 3.1

Method: Expertise and certainty

A length

B standing 

C coherence

D unity

Worked steps

B. an expert who checks and finds the claim overstated discounts the rest.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Which is analysis rather than speculation?

- A** He qualifies because he is unsure.
- B** He qualifies because his specialist audience will check the claim.
- C** He qualifies because qualification is good style.
- D** He qualifies often.

Solution 3.2

- A He qualifies because he is unsure.
- B He qualifies because his specialist audience will check the claim.** 
- C He qualifies because qualification is good style.
- D He qualifies often.

Worked steps

- B.** it links the choice to an observable feature of the situation.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

An unwelcome argument is addressed to a hostile readership.

- (a) State the likely level of qualification.
- (b) Explain why it serves the purpose.

Solution 3.3

Method: Purpose and hedging

Worked steps

(a) heavy **B1**. (b) a hostile reader will stop at an unqualified claim **B1**, so qualification buys the hearing the argument needs **B1**.