

# Author's Purpose

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## *Connections*

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### **Have you ever ...**

- Suspected that what looked like an article was really an ad?
- Read an editorial with skepticism because of who the author was?
- Skipped reading a blog post because it seemed to be promoting a product?

There's a purpose behind everything you read. Sometimes the purpose is clear, like selling a product or describing a new work policy. Sometimes it's harder to determine.

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The **author's purpose** is the author's goal in writing. The author's perspective and opinions relate to the purpose.

- A company-wide memo or email written by a supervisor will be different from one written by a client.
- A letter to the editor supporting a candidate written by the campaign's supervisor will be different from one written by a concerned citizen.
- A historical speech will be different from a historical diary entry.





## Big Picture & Details to Find Purpose

Authors write for different purposes. If you are aware of why the author wrote something, you can better understand the text and how it's useful to you. To find the purpose, look at the **big picture and details**.

*Use this cover letter for the exercises that follow.*

Dear Sue Randall,

My name is Mary Peterson, and I would like to apply for the paralegal job opening at Kelly, Kelly, & Stevens. I was excited to read about the position. I have several years of relevant experience in a variety of fields including insurance and finance, and I recently completed my paralegal training. Growing up, I was glued to television shows about the legal field and was fascinated by the legal process. I have always had a passion for the law and hope to start law school next year.



In addition to my extensive office experience and paralegal training, I have strong communication, customer service, and administrative skills. My broad background makes me an excellent candidate for this position.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Mary Peterson

### **Big Picture: Preview the Text**

First, get the big picture. To begin to understand the author's purpose, skim the text. What do the titles, heads, images, and central ideas tell you about the purpose?



1. Skim this passage. What does skimming tell you about the author's purpose? Fill in the Big Picture in the graphic organizer.

*Using*

**D A R E**

An overview of the author's purpose can help you plan how you will **approach** a text.

- D**etermine Purpose
- A**pproach the Text
- R**ead
- E**valuate

## Author's Purpose

### Big Picture & Details

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What's the big picture?

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**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning
Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning

The format tells you that the passage is a letter. Letters are usually addressed to somebody specific for a particular reason. If the letter is professional, the author often begins by stating the purpose of the letter. By reading the opening sentence you can get a general idea of why the author is writing. Mary Peterson is applying for a paralegal job at a law firm.

### Details: Examine Word Choice and Examples

Now that you've got the big picture, hone in on details to support your ideas. Look for specific words and examples that reveal how an author feels about a subject.

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2. What words show the author's feelings? Add two words as details in the **big picture and details** graphic organizer.

### Big Picture & Details

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What's the big picture?

<i>Mary Peterson is applying for a paralegal job at a law firm.</i>
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**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning
Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning

The words *excited* and *passion* show the feelings the author is trying to convey. She's trying to show how excited she is about the job.

- ? 3. Add to the organizer one additional detail that helps reveal the author’s purpose.

**Big Picture & Details**

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What’s the big picture?

Mary Peterson is applying for a paralegal job at a law firm.

**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

Detail excited  
Meaning thrilled, shows enthusiasm

Detail passion  
Meaning great desire or love; shows personal commitment

Detail  
Meaning

Detail  
Meaning

You might focus on this sentence: “Growing up, I was glued to television shows about the legal field and was fascinated by the legal process.” The author’s fascination with the law from childhood shows a personal interest in the position.

**Evaluate to Find the Author’s Purpose**

Review the **big picture and details**. Use the combined information to draw a complete picture of the author’s reason for writing.

**Big Picture & Details**

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What’s the big picture?

Mary Peterson is applying for a paralegal job at a law firm.

**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

Detail excited  
Meaning thrilled, shows enthusiasm

Detail passion  
Meaning great desire or love; shows personal commitment

Detail Fascinated with law from childhood  
Meaning Personal interest in the job

Detail  
Meaning

- ? 4. What is the author’s purpose?

The author is applying for a job and wants to convince Susan Randall that she is the best candidate because of her enthusiasm for the job and personal commitment to the law.

Practice  
It!

*Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.*

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### **About Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles**

The Kemp's ridley turtles are considered the smallest sea turtle in the world, with adults reaching about 2 feet long and weighing up to 100 pounds. They are found in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic seaboard and feed primarily on crab species living on the seafloor of shallow waters. Their name comes from a fisherman named Richard Kemp of Key West, Florida, who provided the specimen used to describe the species in 1880. They are related to olive ridleys, another small sea turtle found around the world.



Kemp's ridley sea turtles are listed in the U.S. and internationally as endangered throughout their range due to dramatic population declines in the 20th Century. The vast majority of Kemp's ridleys converge on three major sites in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico every year to nest. In the early 1960s, a film was discovered that showed an estimated 40,000 females nesting at one particular site—Rancho Nuevo—on one day.

Threats to Kemp's ridleys once included egg collection, overhunting, and unintentional capture during fisheries operations. Today, most of their nesting occurs on protected lands. Nonetheless, nesting habitat is still sometimes disturbed by natural and human events such as hurricanes, oil spills, or erosion. Also, activities that affect the seafloor (what scientists call benthic habitat) can disturb their feeding habitat. This includes bottom trawling and dredging. Another known threat is incidental capture, or unintentional by-catch, in fishing gear.

Although conservation efforts began in the 1960s, the number of nesting females continued to decline. By 1978, the U.S. and Mexico started a multi-agency effort to safeguard Kemp's ridleys from extinction by encouraging nesting at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. Biologists have since been monitoring nesting activity, and there has been an increase in the number of nests since 1985.

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Source: National Park Service, adapted from "Endangered Sea Turtle Feeding Grounds Discovered in Gulf," <http://www.nps.gov/news/release.htm?id=1484>

1. Preview the passage. What is the central idea, the big picture of what the author is trying to say?
- Kemp's ridley sea turtles are endangered.
  - Kemp's ridley sea turtles are fascinating creatures.
  - Kemp's ridley sea turtles need your help.
  - Kemp's ridley sea turtles are related to olive ridleys.

2. Read the following details from the passage.

The Kemp's ridley turtles are considered the smallest sea turtle in the world, with adults reaching about 2 feet long and weighing up to 100 pounds.

Kemp's ridley sea turtles are listed in the U.S. and internationally as endangered throughout their range due to dramatic population declines in the 20th century.

Although conservation efforts began in the 1960s, the number of nesting females continued to decline.

What does the author hope to do through these details?

- Entertain the reader
  - Inform the reader
  - Persuade the reader
  - Raise questions for the reader to consider
3. Consider the **big picture and details** of this passage.
- What is the author's purpose in writing this passage? How do you know?
  - In what kind of publication would you find this passage, and who might read it?

### *Reading for Understanding*

The facts, details, and examples that authors select depend on their purpose for writing.

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

**It's an Unfair Tax**

As a small farm owner, I am horrified that the latest proposed ballot measure includes a hidden tax. Those who support it claim that it will raise money for schools, but they leave out important information: how the money is raised.



An income tax should be a tax on earned income, i.e., a tax on profit generated by the business. Instead, this proposal would change the law so that farms and other small businesses would be expected to pay a tax on our gross income, even if we don't make a profit. This is a travesty. Where will small businesses get the money to pay tax on income that's already been spent on expenses? Prices will need to go up, and that means we will lose business. Agriculture is one of the reasons our state is thriving, but we farmers can't survive this. I wish I could pick up my farm and move it.

Sarah McPherson

4. Complete the following **big picture and details** graphic organizer.

**Big Picture & Details**

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What's the big picture?

**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

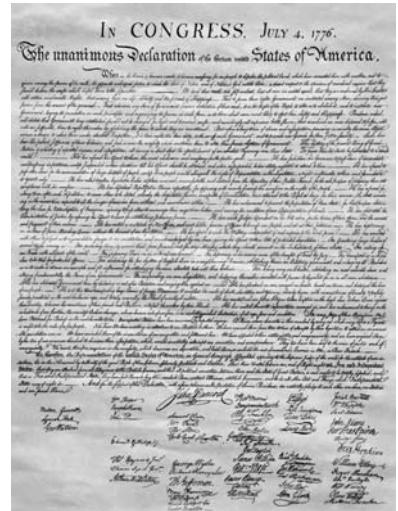
Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning
Detail Meaning	Detail Meaning

5. Based on the **big picture and details**, what is the author's purpose?



## Check Your Skills

The Declaration of Independence is one of the founding documents of the United States. It was written when the United States was in the midst of the Revolutionary War, the fight for independence from Great Britain. In June 1776, a five-man committee including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin drafted the Declaration as a formal statement of the colonies' intention to start a new nation. It was formally adopted on July 4, a date now celebrated as the beginning of American independence.



**Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.**

### From the Declaration of Independence

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute

new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

This passage is from a **primary source**—a text written during a historical period being studied.

Source: The Declaration of Independence, available at the National Archives: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)



1. Which of the following best states the author's purpose?
  - a. To convince France that the revolutionaries are in the right
  - b. To explain why the people are separating from the government
  - c. To argue against any form of government as limiting people's rights
  - d. To persuade the people not to overthrow the government



- 2. Describe the reasons the author gives for making this declaration.
  
- 3. Explain what the author probably hopes to accomplish. Who might the author hope to influence?

### *Reading for Understanding*

The **author's purpose** is often directly related to the author's **tone**, which is the author's attitude about a subject.

The first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. It is one of the founding documents of the United States. The Bill of Rights added specific guarantees of rights to the Constitution and also declared that these were not meant to limit the rights of the people. The following passage is the introduction to the Bill of Rights.

**Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.**

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### Introduction to the Bill of Rights

The Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution.

This passage is from a **primary source**—a text written during a historical period being studied.

Source: The Bill of Rights, available at the National Archives:  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)

4. Why was the Bill of Rights written?
- To introduce tactics for fighting against an oppressive government
  - To add constitutional amendments that protect the rights of the American people
  - To express complaints by individual states about the federal government
  - To introduce tactics to protect the government against its people



5. When the Constitution was written, some representatives did not want to include specific rights, for fear that the Constitution would be interpreted as recognizing only those rights. What is the opposing viewpoint that led to the Bill of Rights?

6. Which of the following statements most strongly supports the purpose for the Bill of Rights?
- “The conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire,”
  - “in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added”
  - “Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring,”
  - “all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution.”

*Remember  
the Concept*

Look at the **big picture and details** to understand the author’s purpose.

**Author's Purpose**

page 119

**Big Picture & Details to Find Purpose**

**Practice It!**

pages 123–125

1. a. Kemp's ridley sea turtles are endangered.
2. b. Inform the reader

No opinion or bias is shown in the details, and the author doesn't try to entertain or question.

- 3a. The author's purpose is to inform the reader about the state of Kemp's ridley turtles. Information is presented in a factual, straightforward way, so the intent is to convey information.
- 3b. This passage could be found in an environmental or wildlife magazine or website. People who are interested in wildlife, ecology, or the environment might read this article.
- 4.

**Big Picture & Details**

**Big Picture:** Skim and use your background knowledge to get an overview. What's the big picture?

The proposed ballot measure includes an unfair tax.

**Details:** Look for details to expand and support your ideas.

Detail Raises money for schools  
 Meaning Most people view this as a good thing.

Detail Taxes gross income.  
 Meaning Taxes money that pays for the business's expenses

Detail Where will businesses get the money?  
 Meaning There is no money to pay the tax.

Detail Prices will go up.  
 Meaning Raising prices is bad for business and consumers.

5. The author's purpose is to argue against the proposed ballot measure.

**Check Your Skills**

pages 126–128

1. b. To explain why the people are separating from the government
2. The author says that when it is necessary to separate politically from another entity, it is respectful and decent to explain why.
3. The author probably hopes to get world opinion on his side, as well as the opinions of the people of the colonies. It is unlikely that the author seeks to influence the British government through this document.

4. b. To add constitutional amendments that protect the rights of the American people
5. To prevent abuse of powers and to protect rights, specific amendments should be added to guarantee certain important rights. The Bill of Rights includes the Ninth Amendment, which states: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” In other words, though the Bill of Rights explicitly affirms specific rights, those are not the only rights of the people.
6. b. “in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added”