



# A Step-by-Step Guide To Creating Reader Personas

Let's begin.

## Step #1 – Start with stats—demographics

- Certain characteristics of a persona are easier to research than others.
- Here's a list of common demographics, but there are more:
  - location      ■ age      ■ educational level
  - gender      ■ income      ■ marital status
  - religion      ■ ethnicity      ■ number of children
- If you already have a blog and some readership, it's much easier to determine demographics.
- However, you can nail down some important attributes of any audience with a few free tools.
- Always start with [Alexa](#). You can enter your site, or a close competitor's site (which has the audience you want), into the search bar. It works best on high traffic sites.
- When you do, you'll get information on gender, education, and browsing locations.
- Write down these rough percentages somewhere.
- Next, go to the [Google AdWords](#) Display Planner. It gives you more than just search volume data.
- Put in a keyword into the first text box that fits your niche well, target whichever countries you'd like, and then submit the form.
- Most people ignore it because they're only looking for search volumes.
- However, this is some of the most accurate data you can get for gender and age.
- Repeat this process for a bunch of keywords, and then average out your results.
- Next, we're going to use Google Analytics (GA), but only if you already have a decent-size audience.
- Go to "Audience > Demographics > Overview" in GA, and enable data collection if you haven't yet.
- Then, come back a day or two later, and you will see a bunch of data collected from your actual visitors, including age and gender.

- This is the most accurate data, so use this as a primary source and the others as supplementary.
- Still in GA, go to the “Audience” menu option. Browse through the tabs such as “geo,” which will give you language and location results.
- By now, you should have 4-5 core demographics about your readers. Write them down in point form in a file somewhere. For example:
  - **Gender** – about an even 50/50 split, might be skewed toward more females
  - **Education** - slightly less educated than the average Internet user
  - **Location** - most likely readers are from the US, the UK, and India
  - **Age** - average age is about 30, very few senior readers
  - **Income** – likely low to medium due to a relatively young age
- Some demographics, such as income, are tough to research. However, you can take educated guesses about them based on other demographic stats.
- That’s a very good start, but if you want to get even more detailed demographics, you can use [some of the tools compiled here](#).

## Step #2 – What is your reader thinking?—Psychographics

- Next up are psychographics, which inform you about the values, attitudes, preferences, and thoughts of a group. In this case, it’s your readers.
- Here’s a basic list of questions you’ll eventually need to answer:
  - Why do they want to learn about (your niche)?
  - How important is (your niche) to them, i.e., is it a hobby or part of their job?
  - What common questions do they have about (your niche)?
  - How knowledgeable are they about (your niche)?
- Unfortunately, we can’t just look these up on Alexa or GA. To do this, first you need to find your audience.
- **Option #1 – Start with Reddit:** You’re looking for any specific forum or group where your potential audience is active. You need to be able to see discussion among the people whom you’re trying to understand.
- Starting with [Reddit](#) unless you already have a specific group in mind.

- You can find most audiences on Reddit. All you need to do is use the [subreddit search](#) function and type in your niche.
- Pick the most relevant subreddit that has at least a few thousand subscribers.
- If you've never used Reddit before, check out [my guide to marketing on Reddit](#), which will walk you through the basics of how the site works.
- Start by clicking the “top” filter, and set it to show links from “all time”.
- This will show you the most popular (upvoted) posts in the subreddit of all time.
- Look through at least 50-100 threads. Then, go back to the default subreddit filters, and go through another few hundred threads.
- Look for things they don't like (get zero votes) or don't care much about (get a few votes).
- From doing this, you can start answering the questions we identified earlier, understand what your audience's big problems are, and what helps them the most.
- **Option #2 – There's always a forum:** Any audience that uses the Internet participates in at least one forum.
- Google “(your niche) forum,” and you'll find at least 2-3, if not several.
- Employ the same process as you did with Reddit. Go through at least a few hundred threads, observe, and note down what the readers like and dislike.
- Now, go back to your sheet with your demographics, and jot down the answers to those questions we asked at the start of this section.

### Step #3 – Base your decisions on behavior

- When it comes to content, there are a few main questions about your audience that you should be able to answer.
- **Question #1 – How do they like to consume content?** Every audience likes to consume content differently.
- There are 3 main aspects of content that you need to determine:
  - What format do they prefer (e.g., video, text, audio)?
  - How often? (an hour a week? an hour a day?)
  - What length of content do they prefer?

- There are many ways in which the answers to these questions can be combined to produce different optimal types of content.
- You find these answers by going back to those forums.
- Note down the three aspects for all the content that gets voted up or gets a lot of replies.
- You might find that your potential audience likes to consume long, in-depth (>2,000 words) written articles once every few days.
- Or you might find that they prefer to watch quick videos multiple times per week.
- Regardless, this will tell you how they connect their problems to their behavior.
- **Questions #2 – What are they most convinced by?** The first question is the most important, but it's also important to understand what your readers trust.
- If someone has a problem they want to solve, they need to trust you and your content before your content can help them.
- Again, go back to a forum or two, and read through the most popular threads.
- Take note of the credibility of each post.

#### Step 4: Put your reader persona together, and use it

- The goal here is to take all that information and apply it to a specific avatar. Give him or her a name.
- Then, turn all those bullet points into sentences that describe your avatar. Essentially, you're describing his or her life situation (as it pertains to your content). Here's an example:

Reader name: Sneil Patel

Sneil is a 30-year-old man living in New York, USA. After going to community college, he was able to find a job as a data entry clerk, making approximately \$60,000 a year.

Sneil has developed an interest in getting healthier through nutrition, and he spends time actively learning about this subject online.

He particularly likes to read about nutrition myths and ways to create a diet that works for him and his professional lifestyle, which sometimes requires him to work long hours. In addition to reading, he tries to take at least one in-depth course or tutorial a month.

Since Sneil likes to investigate the truth behind claims, he appreciates content that cites credible research studies. He prefers medium-long content (1,000-2,000 words) that is mostly text. He has time to read a few of these articles a day.

- Do you see how that story brings all the data we've collected together?
- Paragraph 1 is all about demographics.
- Paragraphs 2 and 3 both contain psychographic information.
- Finally, paragraph 4 addresses your avatar's behavior.
- **Using your reader persona:** At this point, you should have a persona that you can use. We recommend printing it out and putting it close to where you write.
- Every piece of content should be written with this person in mind.
- **One final note:** an avatar can evolve. This first version is your best guess at what your readers are like, but as you get feedback from them through comments and emails, you can revise it.