



PERSUASIVE WRITING: THE BASICS

Objective: to influence or change an audience's thoughts or actions.

How to convince others to accept of our point of view (our thesis)?

1. appeal to their reason
2. appeal to their emotions
3. appeal to our (and maybe their) good character—this ethical appeal relies on the audience's trust in your character, that you're arguing an ethically/morally sound position, and that you're knowledgeable or experienced in the field of your argument.

1. **APPEAL TO REASON**—clearly, if you have a central argument (thesis), you'll need to support it in order to convince your audience.
 - Use logical arguments:

LOGIC	
<i>INDUCTIVE</i>	<i>DEDUCTIVE</i>
Supports a general conclusion by examining specific facts or cases. <i>Example: My father smokes and I wish to argue that smoking is endangering his health. His teeth are yellowish and he's lost weight. He can no longer exercise like he used to. Whenever my father exercises, he ends up coughing hard. Therefore, smoking is likely endangering my father's health.</i>	Begins with a general principle or premise and draws a specific conclusion from it. <i>Example: All people who smoke endanger their health. (major premise). My father smokes. (minor premise). Therefore, my father is endangering his health.</i>

- Acknowledge both sides to the issue
- Define your terms
- Be sure your stance and reasons are clear and supportable
- Evidence: sufficient amount? Credible source and content? Verifiable?
- Ensure the conclusion follows logically

2. APPEAL TO EMOTION

- Use vivid images
- Use emotive examples
- Use emotionally charged language
 - Try to avoid oversimplification by making an issue seem "purely" emotional

Some structural suggestions:

Persuasive writing may be like any other kind of writing; it may be formal, as in a literary essay, or it may be less formal, as in the structure of some letters to the editor of a newspaper. For the purposes of this course, you will practice a more formal style, delivered in 3rd person, with present tense verbs, formal language, and no contractions.

Persuasive writing typically adheres to the following format:

1. Introduction: introduce the topic in an interesting way; present your thesis; outline your arguments.
2. Arguments: explore at least three arguments that support your thesis. Use examples and other evidence to support your thesis.
3. Conclusion: Rephrase your thesis; review your arguments; conclude with insight, perhaps a call to action.

Introduction

The beginning: Create an interesting, attention-getting opener. Some suggestions include:

1. Open with an unusual detail: (Manitoba, because of its cold climate, is not thought of as a great place to be a reptile. Actually, it has the largest seasonal congregation of garter snakes in the world!)
2. Open with a strong statement: (Cigarettes are the number one cause of lighter sales in Canada!)
3. Open with a quotation: (Elbert Hubbard once said , "Truth is stronger than fiction.")
4. Open with an anecdote: an anecdote can provide an amusing and attention-getting Open if it is short and to the point.
5. Open with a statistic or fact: sometimes a statistic or fact will add emphasis or interest to your topic. It may be wise to include the item's authoritative source.
6. Open with a question. (Have you ever considered how many books we'd read if it were not for television?)
7. Open with an exaggeration or outrageous statement. (The whole world watched as the comet flew overhead.)

The body

The body should consist of at least three solid arguments to support your thesis statement. Since most issues have reasonable arguments on both sides of the question, a good persuasive writer tries to anticipate opposing viewpoints and provide counter arguments along with the main points in the piece of writing.

Order of ideas

- If you think your audience will be sympathetic to your cause, you may want to begin with your weaker arguments and build up to a strong, convincing conclusion.
- If you suspect that your audience will need more persuading, consider beginning with a strong point that will catch their interest. The weaker arguments can be placed in the middle, and then the ending will still need to be strong.

Methods of proof

Use statistics, real-life experiences, or examples from literature or film. Additionally, you may want to:

- **Generate a hypothetical instance:** Used particularly when creating an argument and you want the reader to see a different point of view. Use cues for the reader. (i.e. "suppose that," "what if...")
- **Clarify a position:** Think about what needs to be explained and what can be assumed.
- **Draw comparisons:** Choose something similar to what is being explained.
- **Make an analysis:** You can analyze a problem by looking at the parts, and therefore help to clarify your position to the reader.
- **Draw an analogy:** Use an analogy to explain or elaborate an idea by identifying significant likenesses between two objects or ideas when otherwise they are quite different. This is helpful when the comparison is made to something that is familiar to the reader.

The conclusion

1. Restate your thesis or focus statement.
2. Summarize the main points: The conclusion enables your reader to recall the main points of your position. In order to do this you can paraphrase the main points of your argument.
3. Write a personal comment or call for action. You can do this...
 - **With a prediction:** this can be used with a narrative or a cause and effect discussion. The conclusion may suggest or predict what the results may or may not be in the situation discussed or in similar situations.
 - **With a question:** closing with a question lets your readers make their own predictions, draw their own conclusions.
 - **With recommendations:** a "recommendations closing" is one that stresses the actions or remedies that should be taken.
 - **With a quotation:** since a quotation may summarize, predict, question, or call for action, you may use a quotation within a conclusion for nearly any kind of paper.

Some further suggestions:

Tips: use the active voice; avoid clichés (like the plague- oh, so funny); be succinct and clear; write in third person

Some examples of stylistic (rhetorical) devices to help persuade your audience:

-humour	-hyperbole	-vary sentence length
-examples	-repetition	-understatement
-anecdotes	-parallel construction	-comparisons
-metaphor	-emotive, vivid imagery	-analogies
-simile	-allusion	

Sources:

http://www.orangeusd.k12.ca.us/yorba/persuasive_writing.htm

<http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/argument.htm>