

LESSON 2: PERSUASIVE WRITING



Here you'll find an overview of the principles used in persuasive writing. See these principles as tools to make your writing more effective: applying any or all of them will help strengthen and clarify your message.

PREWRITING FOR THE PERSUASIVE ESSAY

The prewriting phase of writing a persuasive essay is extremely important. During this phase, writers should plan every aspect of the essay:

Choose a position. Writers should think about the issue and pick the side they wish to advocate.

Understand the audience. In order to write an effective persuasive essay, the writer must understand the reader's perspective. Is the reader undecided or inclined to favor one side or the other?

Do the research. A persuasive essay depends upon solid, convincing evidence. Don't rely on a single source. Go to the library and enlist the help of the librarian. Speak with community experts and teachers. Read and take notes. There is no substitute for knowledge of both sides of the issue.

Identify the most convincing evidence, as well as the key points for the opposing view.

ORGANIZING THE PERSUASIVE ESSAY: OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE

Introductory Paragraph

- Grab the reader's attention by using a "hook."
- Give an overview of the argument.
- Close with a thesis statement that reveals the position to be argued.

Body Paragraphs

- Each body paragraph should focus on one piece of evidence.
- Within each paragraph, provide sufficient supporting detail.
- Opposing View Paragraph. Describe and then refute the key points of the opposing view.

Concluding Paragraph

- Restate and reinforce the thesis and supporting evidence.

RHETORICAL DEVICES

In rhetoric, a rhetorical device or resource of language is a technique that an author or speaker uses to convey to the listener or reader a meaning with the goal of persuading him or her towards considering a topic from a different perspective, using sentences designed to encourage or provoke a rational argument from an emotional display of a given perspective or action. Note that although rhetorical devices may be used to evoke an emotional response in the audience, this is not their primary purpose.

Logos is the use of logical ideas to appeal to the audience.

Pathos is an appeal to the audience's emotions.

Ethos describes the guiding tenets that characterize a community, nation, or ideology; it may also appeal to the author's credibility. It is an appeal based on the character of the speaker.

Kairos is an appeal to the timeliness of the argument.

A comprehensive list of rhetorical devices and definitions:

hhs-english-iv.wikispaces.com/file/view/Rhetorical+Devices.pdf

A few examples of rhetorical devices in famous speeches:

hubpages.com/literature/Examples-of-Rhetorical-Devices-in-Famous-Speeches

TIPS TO REMEMBER

The introductory paragraph should have a strong “hook” that grabs the reader’s attention. Open with an unusual fact or statistic, a question or quotation, or an emphatic statement. For example: “Driving while talking on a cell phone, even hands-free, is the equivalent of driving drunk.”

The thesis statement should leave no doubts about the writer’s position.

Each body paragraph should cover a separate point, and the sentences of each paragraph should offer strong evidence in the form of facts, statistics, quotes from experts, and real-life examples.

Consider various ways to make the argument, including using an analogy, drawing comparisons, or illustrating with hypothetical situation (e.g., what if, suppose that).

Don’t assume the audience has in-depth knowledge of the issue. Define terms and give background information.

The concluding paragraph should summarize the most important evidence and encourage the reader to adopt the position or take action. The closing sentence can be a dramatic plea, a prediction that implies urgent action is needed, a question that provokes readers to think seriously about the issue, or a recommendation that gives readers specific ideas on what they can do.



CHALLENGE

Choose a current event topic that interests you and find two articles or op-eds of opposing views on that topic. As you read both articles, take note of the way the author constructs their argument. See if you can pick out any rhetorical devices. Then answer these questions as a writing exercise or reflection: What kind of rhetoric do they primarily use? Did one of the articles convince you or make you think differently? Why or why not?

Next Step: How do I use these same techniques in my own writing?

Email your challenge to laurelnakai@gmail.com by May 9