

Persuasion



Persuasive/Argumentative Essay

What is a persuasive/argumentative essay?

Persuasive writing, used in an argument essay, utilizes logic and reason to show that one idea is more legitimate than another idea. It attempts to persuade a reader to adopt a certain point of view or to take a particular action. The argument must always use sound reasoning and solid evidence by stating facts, giving logical reasons, using examples, and quoting experts.

When planning a persuasive essay, follow these steps:

1. **Choose your position.** Which side of the issue or problem are you going to write about, and what solution will you offer? Know the purpose of your essay.
2. **Analyze your audience.** Decide if your audience agrees with you, is neutral, or disagrees with your position.
3. **Research your topic.** A persuasive essay must provide specific and convincing evidence. Often it is necessary to go beyond your own knowledge and experience. You might need to go to the library or interview people who are experts on your topic.
4. **Structure your essay.** Determine what evidence you will include and in what order you will present the evidence. Remember to consider your purpose, your audience, and your topic.

The following criteria are essential to produce an effective argument:

- **Be well informed about your topic.** To add to your knowledge of a topic, read thoroughly about it, using legitimate sources. Take notes.
- **Test your thesis.** Your thesis, i.e., argument, must have two sides. It must be debatable. If you can write down a thesis statement directly opposing your own, you will ensure that your own argument is debatable.
- **Disprove the opposing argument.** Understand the opposite viewpoint of your position and then counter it by providing contrasting evidence or by finding mistakes and inconsistencies in the logic of the opposing argument.
- **Support your position with evidence.** Remember that your evidence must appeal to reason. The following are different ways to support your argument:

Facts - A powerful means of convincing, facts can come from your readings, observations, or personal experiences.

Statistics - Be sure your statistics come from responsible sources. Always cite your sources.

Quotations - Direct quotations from leading experts effectively support your position.

Examples - Examples enhance your meaning and make your ideas concrete. They are the proof that backs up your point.

To evaluate the effectiveness of an argument essay, ask two questions:

1. Is the opinion based on facts and specific evidence rather than on personal judgments and emotional reactions?
 2. Does the method of presenting the opinion have enough impact to persuade the reader to agree?
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Writing

Persuasive Essays

They could do it
because they believed they could.

Virgil

70 - 19 B.C. Roman

In persuasive or argumentative writing, we try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking.

Elements toward building a good persuasive essay include:

- **establishing facts**
to support an argument
- **clarifying relevant values**
for your audience (perspective)
- **prioritizing, editing, and/or sequencing**
the facts and values in importance to build the argument
- **forming and stating conclusions**
- **"persuading" your audience** that your conclusions are based upon the agreed-upon facts and shared values
- **having the confidence**
to communicate your "persuasion" in writing

Here are some strategies to complete a persuasive writing assignment:

Write out the questions in your own words.

- **Think of the questions posed in the assignment** while you are reading and researching. Determine
 - facts
 - the source of the facts for reliability and later reference
 - source of the facts for prejudice
 - values that color the facts or the issue
 - what you think of the author's argument

- **List out facts;** consider their importance: prioritize, edit, sequence, discard, etc.
Ask yourself "What's missing?"
- **What are the "hot buttons"** of the issue?
List possible emotions/emotional reactions and recognize them for later use

Start writing a draft! (refer to: [Writing essays, the basics](#))

Start as close as possible to your reading/research

Do not concern yourself with grammar or spelling

- **Write your first paragraph**

Introduce the topic

Inform the reader of your point of view!

Entice the reader to continue with the rest of the paper!

Focus on three main points to develop

- **Establish flow from paragraph to paragraph**
- **Keep your voice active**
- **Quote sources** to establish authority
- **Stay focused** on your point of view throughout the essay
- **Focus on logical arguments**
- **Don't lapse into summary**
in the development--wait for the conclusion
- **Conclusion**

Summarize, then conclude, your argument

Refer to the first paragraph/opening statement as well as the points

Does the conclusion restate the main ideas?

reflect the succession and importance of the arguments

logically conclude their development?

- **Edit/rewrite the first paragraph**
to better telegraph your development and conclusion.

- **Take a day or two off!**
- **Re-read your paper**
with a fresh mind and a sharp pencil

Ask yourself:

Does this make sense? Am I convinced?

Will this convince a reader?

Will they understand my values, and agree with my facts?

Edit, correct, and re-write as necessary

Check spelling and grammar!

Have a friend read it and respond to your argument.

Were they convinced?

Revise if necessary

Turn in the paper

Celebrate a job well done,

with the confidence that you have done your best.

- **How to respond to criticism:**
Consider criticism as a test of developing your powers of persuasion.
Try not to take it personally.
- **If your facts are criticized,** double check them, and then cite your sources.
- **If your values are criticized,** sometimes we need agree "to disagree". Remember: your success in persuading others assumes that the other person is open to being persuaded!

Fear: If you are not used to communicating,

especially in writing, you may need to overcome fear on several levels. Writing, unlike unrecorded speech, is a permanent record for all to see, and the "context" is not as important as in speech where context "colors" the words.

For example: your readers do not see you, only your

words. They do not know what you look like, where you live, who you are.

Hopefully in school, and class, we have a safe place to practice both the art of writing and of persuasion. Then later, when we are in our communities, whether work, church, neighborhoods, and even families, we can benefit from this practice.

Persuasion also has another dimension:

it is built with facts, which illustrate conclusions. Of course, this means you need to know what you are talking about, and cannot be lazy with your facts, or you will not succeed in convincing anyone. This shows another level of fear: Fear of making a mistake that will make your argument or persuasion meaningless. Since you are writing, and the words are on paper for all to see (or on a web site!), you need to work to make sure your facts are in order.

Thanks to the inspiration of S Ryder, and her sixth grade class in Pennsylvania, for revision of this Guide.



<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/wrtstr4.htm>

<http://www.delmar.edu/engl/wrtctr/handouts/argument.htm>

<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/wrtstr4.htm>

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