

WRITING PERSUASIVELY

The goal of persuasive writing is to convince others of your position. You may be advocating for change, persuading readers to agree with your stance on a controversial viewpoint, or calling your audience to action.

"The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." – Prov. 16:21 (ESV)

TIPS FOR WRITING PERSUASIVELY

1. **Be clear** – Laying out your argument in a clear and simple manner will help your readers understand your viewpoint.
2. **Be logical and organized** – Your ideas should flow logically from one idea to the next. Use a well-organized thesis statement and strong topic sentences for each paragraph. Your readers are more likely to be swayed if they can follow your argument.
3. **Be confident but professional** - State your point in direct terms, but use professional language and do not insult your opponents. If you appear too biased, your readers may dismiss your argument. Although exaggeration can be used as a persuasive strategy, take care not to overuse words like "obviously" or "never"/"always."
4. **Consider alternate points of view** – Rather than ignoring the counterarguments to your stance, acknowledge and address them, providing evidence or reasoning to refute them. If a position is genuinely disputed, controversial, or unclear in the research evidence, be honest. This will gain your reader's trust and may address possible counterarguments.
5. **Know your audience's viewpoint** – Are you writing to an audience that is likely to agree with you, disagree with you, or fall somewhere in between? Choose your arguments based on your audience's viewpoint (i.e., not too far in the range of what your audience already thinks or knows since that does not change their minds, but also not too far in the range of what your audience firmly disagrees with since that may alienate them). A good strategy can be to start with information your readers will agree with and move into progressively controversial points throughout the paper.
6. **Know your audience's style** - What form of argument is going to affect your readers the most? Which of the following persuasive strategies will most likely impact this audience? Which is most appropriate to the setting and tone of your writing?

- a. **Emotional appeal** - Human stories, shocking anecdotes to grab attention, or appeals to emotions like nostalgia, fear, anger, or compassion
- b. **Statistics or scientific support** - Numbers, data, and results from scientific research
- c. **Expert opinion** - Direct quotes or opinions from subject experts on your topic
- d. **Consensus effect** - Information on the number/percentage of people who agree with your viewpoint

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

- **Rhetorical questions** - Invite your audience to draw their own conclusion.
- **Attention hooks** - Start with something that will interest your audience.
- **Empathic statements or tone** - Increase your appeal and character in the eyes of your audience.
- **Adjectives and adverbs** - Choose accurate and powerful words.
- **Alliteration, rhyming, or puns** - Words that have a catchy “ring” to them can make your point seem memorable and witty.
- **Imagery, metaphors, or similes** - Word pictures can be powerful and memorable.
- **Inclusive language** - Language like “we” or “us” can build credibility by implying that you are on the same team and understand your audience.
- **Sarcasm or exaggeration** - Use these only with caution and if you are sure it will fit for your audience (it may make you seem clever or funny, or it may alienate your readers).

PRACTICE NOW