

Ethical Usage

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the importance of demonstrating credibility in an ethical manner. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Ethical Usage of Credibility Appeals
2. Ethical Considerations

1. Ethical Usage of Credibility Appeals

Speeches grounded in the principles of rhetoric focus on three types of rhetorical appeals: logos, pathos, and **ethos**.

While logos and pathos appeal to reason and emotion, respectively, ethos takes on a decidedly different approach entirely. Speakers using ethos seek to persuade their audience by demonstrating their own credibility and authority.

To elaborate, the construction of authority is reflected in how a speaker presents themselves, what diction they use, how they phrase their ideas, what other authorities to which they refer, how they composes themselves under stress, their experience within the context of their message, as well as their personal or academic background.



TERM TO KNOW

Ethos

A rhetorical appeal to an audience based on the speaker/writer's credibility.

2. Ethical Considerations

Obviously, if you elucidate a persuasive portrait of your personal credibility and authority, you make a more persuasive case on the credibility and authority of your words. However, when building a persuasive case using ethos, it may be tempting to stray into territory that borders on the unethical.

IN CONTEXT

Consider the following example:

You might not realize it at first, but interviewing for a job is an abbreviated form of persuasive speaking. You're trying to persuade an employer to offer you a job. This method of persuasion relies heavily on the use of ethos, as you're trying to make your case as to why you're the best person for the job.

When you submit your résumé and cover letter, you provide your potential employer with an overview of your skills, experiences and background and how they best fit with the position and company with whom you seek employment.

While many employers complete extensive background reviews and reference checks, they may not follow up with every single bullet point on your résumé. While it might be tempting to beef up your list of achievements by stretching the truth: naming yourself a college club president as opposed to member, listing an award you may have nominated for but not having won (without clarifying that fact) - these are all unethical ways of padding your résumé, and thus, unethically using ethos to persuade your potential employer to hire you for the job.

This same example holds true in more formal scenarios of persuasive public speaking. It is unethical to lie to your audience about who you are and what you bring to the table in terms of experience, credibility and authority. It is equally unethical to even bend the truth on the slightest detail about what makes you a credible or authoritative speaker on your given subject.

Whether it's a flat-out moment of dishonesty or a simple "little white lie," disingenuousness, once discovered, will eradicate *any* credibility or authority you have as a speaker. When it comes to ethical usage of credibility appeals, stick to authenticity and speaking honestly about who you are.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that ethos is considered the credibility appeal, or a rhetorical appeal to an audience based on the speaker's credibility. It is unethical to lie to your audience about who you are and what you bring to the table in terms of experience, credibility and authority. When it comes to **ethical usage of credibility appeals**, stick to authenticity and speaking honestly about who you are.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Ethos

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