

# Persuasion

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to effectively apply persuasive techniques to academic writing. Specifically, this lesson will focus on:

## 1. Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of **persuasion** in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different.

An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.



### HINT

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a *valid* one, not simply the *right* one.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Persuasion

In writing, the attempt to convince, motivate, or move readers in favor of a certain point of view or opinion.

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## 2. Structure of a Persuasive Essay

There are five features that make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

- Introduction and thesis

- Opposing and qualifying ideas
- Strong evidence in support of claim
- Style and tone of language
- Compelling conclusion

Take a look at each of these a little more closely.

1. *Introduction and thesis*: The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.
2. *Opposing and qualifying ideas*: Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also, state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.
3. *Strong evidence in support of claim*: Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.
4. *Style and tone of language*: Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.
5. *Compelling conclusion*: Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

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## 3. Bias in Persuasive Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view.

The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth, and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is that it can begin to take over the essay if you let it. This usually occurs in the following ways:

- Neglecting opposing ideas
- Exaggerating your points
- Inserting yourself ahead of the subject by using the first person ("I think...")

Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the **purpose of persuasive writing** is to convince readers of a specific point. The **structure of a persuasive essay** includes an introduction with a thesis, a discussion of opposing ideas, strong evidence, appropriate style and language choices, and a conclusion. You also learned about the presence of **bias in persuasive writing** and how to prevent it from taking over your essay.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Persuasion" tutorial.



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