

Persuading

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Most writing falls into one of two categories:

- Information
- Persuasion

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When you *inform*, your purpose is to convey information:

- Map directions
- Trip reports
- Company policies
- etc.

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When you *persuade*, your purpose is to convince the reader to do something or believe something. You want your reader to:

- Buy your product (take action)
- Agree with you (adopt a belief)

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Persuasive writing appears in:

- Advertisements
- Award nominations
- Editorials
- Letters
- Opinion pieces
- Petitions
- Scholarly writing
- Speeches
- etc.

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When will you write persuasively? Someday you might want to:

- Ask your boss for a raise
- Complain to a company about poor service
- Write to your congressman seeking to have the pothole outside your house repaired
- Write to a movie star asking for an autographed photograph

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The *four elements* of persuasive writing:

1. Position
2. Supports
3. Methods
4. Call to action

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Your *position* is what you want your reader to do or believe:

- *"The Semi-Annual Sale Starts at Midnight."*
- *"Susan Ramos for Councilwoman."*
- *"Uniforms should be mandatory in public schools."*

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Supports strengthen or reinforce your position:

- *"One child dies from hunger every six seconds."*
- *"Nutrition experts recommend daily servings of foods with Omega 3."*

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Persuasive *methods* convince your reader:

- "*Professor, you're a great teacher. About my grade...*"
- "*I missed the midterm because my car broke down. Can I make it up?*"

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The *call to action* gets your reader to... take action!

- *"Order now and receive a free gift."*
- *"Donate \$50 or more to join the Public Television Community."*
- *"Click here for download."*

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Let's take a look at *persuasive methods*...

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Persuasive methods can be divided into two groups:

- Appeal to reason
- Appeal to emotion

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Appeal to reason uses logic, facts, and proof. This type of persuasive method is often found in:

- Peer-reviewed scientific articles
- Academic articles

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Appeal to reason relies on the rigorous application of correct argumentation and logic. For example, is this conclusion valid or invalid?

1. All Greeks are human.
2. All humans are mortal.
3. Therefore, all Greeks are mortal.

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Valid. If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.

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How about this one?

1. Some Greeks are logicians.
2. Some logicians are boring.
3. Therefore, some Greeks are boring.

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How about this one?

1. Some Greeks are logicians.
2. Some logicians are boring.
3. Therefore, some Greeks are boring.

Invalid. The boring logicians might all be Romans (for example).

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- Unlike appeal to reason, *appeal to emotion* manipulates the reader's emotions in order to persuade
- Instead of facts, emotionally loaded language is used
- And because the precise language of reason is not followed, the conclusions are often not verifiable

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Recognize these ads for Coca-Cola?

- *"Things go better with Coke"*
- *"It's the real thing"*
- *"Have a Coke and a smile"*
- *"Make It Real"*
- *"Open Happiness"*

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The ad appeals to *emotion*. If it appealed to *reason*, it would say Coke contains:

- Sugar
- Caramel color
- Caffeine
- Phosphoric acid
- Coca leaf
- Kola nut extract
- Lime extract
- Vanilla
- Glycerin

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- *Appeal to reason* is considered the superior way to persuade, but *appeal to emotion* is very, very powerful

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- By the way, what's the difference between advertising and propaganda?

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- By the way, what's the difference between advertising and propaganda?

Both are appeals to emotion, but...

Advertising promotes a *product* for commercial purposes

Propaganda promote an *idea* for political purposes

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There are many ways to appeal to emotion:

- *Appeal to age...* "They haven't made a good car since 1969."
- *Appeal to authority...* "The Surgeon General says that eating right reduces the risk for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis."
- *Appeal to consequences...* "If I cheated on my tests, I could never sleep at night."

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- *Appeal to fear...* "My sister accidentally killed herself. She died of skin cancer." (Headline from an American Cancer Society advertisement)
- *Appeal to flattery...* "I needed a beautiful woman to endorse my product, so naturally I thought of you."
- *Appeal to motive...* "You can't believe the website. It recommends Oracle stock but it also displays advertising for Oracle products."
- *Appeal to novelty...* "Our new diet incorporates the latest research in behavior modification."

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- *Appeal to pity...* "Through the Feed-A-Child program your gift of just \$10 a month can save starving children and give them a future."
- *Appeal to poverty...* "If Mother Teresa is against abortion, then it's wrong."
- *Appeal to ridicule...* "You sure know a lot about money for someone who's always broke."
- *Appeal to spite...* "If you vote for Prop. 36 the rich will get richer and we'll have to keep cleaning their houses."

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- *Appeal to the people (appeal to the masses)*... "This book has been on the New York Times' bestseller list for 64 straight weeks."
- *Appeal to the minority*... "Are you going to be a mindless conformist drone and drink milk like everyone else, or will you wake up and drink a Monster?"
- *Appeal to inevitable victory*... "Introducing the next Governor of the State of California."

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- *Appeal to tradition...* "Marriage is meant to be between a man and a woman."
- *Appeal to wealth...* "Robert Kiyosaki, author of Rich Dad Poor Dad, says we should invest in real estate."

Persuading - Summary

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To sum up... when writing persuasively, include the four *elements*:

1. Position
2. Supports
3. Methods
4. Call to action

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Choose which persuasive *method* (or some combination) to use:

- Appeal to reason
- Appeal to emotion

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If using appeal to emotion, choose which *type* (or combination) to include:

- Appeal to age
- Appeal to authority
- Appeal to consequences
- Appeal to fear
- Appeal to flattery
- etc.