

The **purpose** of a persuasive essay is to “win” the **audience** with your opinion. There are many techniques you can use:

1. **EMOTIONAL APPEALS (PATHOS)**

This technique is strongly connected to the essay’s mood. Using emotions like fear, anger and joy can sway your readers. Be aware that it is possible to have *too much* emotion, though.

2. **RHETORICAL QUESTIONING**

This is particularly useful in conclusions. Asking questions with an obvious answer means readers usually have no reason but to agree with you.

3. **REPETITION**

Repeating a point reinforces its importance. This can be done by emphasizing a word, phrase or idea throughout the persuasive essay.

4. **HYPERBOLE**

This is an overstated exaggeration. Though it is not 100% effective it will show your readers a clear opinion or idea.

5. **WORD CHOICE**

Using the right words will help hammer the essay’s argument. Be aware of the verbs you use while writing. Is it “incident” or “accident”; “slim” or “skinny”? Question the meaning and understanding of words when creating an argument.

6. **HOOKING THE READER**

An effective “hook” in the introduction will draw readers to listen to your argument. Interesting facts, quotes, strong statements, and questions can all be used effectively to draw in readers.

7. **APPEAL TO EXPERTS**

Use the knowledge of experts to assist in supporting your argument.

8. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE OPPOSITION**

The most effective debaters mention the opposite argument and then “debunk” it within *their* argument, effectively leaving the other side with nothing to say. When writing an essay, consider what someone who disagrees with you might say. Anticipate your audience and then use that information in your persuasion.

Here are some common examples of **faulty reasoning** (also called *fallacious arguments*) that can weaken a persuasive essay:

1. **AD HOMINEM**

Attacking a person and not their argument. For example, saying that Bill's arguments are always worthless because he once plagiarized is a generalization that attacks Bill. Poor Bill.

2. **STRAW MAN**

Attacking the opposite argument with a ridiculous exaggeration. For example: "The government should fund billions of dollars to the military. It is insane that those in opposition would want to leave this country defenseless."

3. **EXCLUDING MIDDLE / FALSE DICHOTOMY**

When the argument forces the reader to choose between Option A or Option B, (while intentionally leaving out other existing options). For example: You are either a Catholic or an atheist" or "You either believe in the war on terrorism or you are a terrorist".

4. **ARGUMENT FROM AUTHORITY, FALSE AUTHORITY OR ANONYMOUS AUTHORITY**

Using an authority figure can be effective but be aware of who the authority is: are they respected? Are they qualified? Are they real? If not then they should not be used in an argument.

5. **SLIPPERY SLOPE**

Arguing that one thing will inevitably lead to another, and another, and another if the action the reader proposes is not taken.

6. **NON-SEQUITER**

Connecting two things where no connection exists. For example: millions of people see objects in the sky they could not identify. Therefore, the existence of aliens is a certainty.

7. **RED HERRING / CHANGING THE SUBJECT**

Changing the subject is a method that avoids having to defend an opposing argument. For example, if an argument uses a quote from Hitler, calling the opposition anti-Semitic rather than referring to the quote immediately changes the subject.

8. **FALSE COMPROMISE**

Attempting to create a balance between two arguments where a balance does not exist. For example: "Some say the sun rises in the east. Others say it rises in the west. The truth probably lies somewhere in between."

There are many other FALLACIOUS ARGUMENTS that can damage the integrity of a persuasive essay. Be aware of these to keep your essay strong and effective!