

Persuasive Essay

Purpose: To cause a change in thought and/or action. This change may be simply the substitution of one belief for another; or it may result in action such as voting for A instead of B, giving up smoking or buying a product. Clearly, the art of persuasion is used in the fields of law, advertising, marketing, and getting along with parents.

Organization: There are a number of organizational methods. We, however, are going to discuss a method which assumes a hostile or uninformed audience. A good exercise is to list the opposing viewpoints as well as your own. The more you are prepared to rebut their arguments, the more powerful your persuasive essay will be. Overlooking even one opposing argument can destroy the effectiveness of your essay. Your teacher will help you recognize analogous points of argument in your lists for rebuttal purposes. A sample broad outline is suggested below.

- I. Introduction—begins with general, neutral discussion of topic, then acknowledges the opposing point of view and finally states your own view—your thesis.
- II. Acknowledge the opposing arguments and present your counter-arguments. (This may cover several paragraphs.)
- III. Present your own facts and arguments not previously stated in your counter-arguments. It is best to save your strongest argument for last.
- IV. Conclusion—refer to your thesis and suggest a course of action.

Other techniques:

1. Transitional words and phrases that show contrast will need to be employed. For example, you may use a phrase like *some people sincerely believe* to introduce opposing points of view. When switching to the counter-arguments, use transitions like, *on the other hand*, or *under careful analysis, however*.
2. The support you offer must be factual. Statements of opinion by experts will strengthen your argument as well. Therefore, research may be necessary. A well-chosen anecdote which supports a fact can have positive emotional appeal to the reader, too. However, do not rely solely on emotional appeal.
3. Treat the opposing viewpoint with respect. A scornful or defensive tone will produce a negative reaction from your reader.