

The Art of Persuasion

Classical rhetoric:
logos, ethos & pathos

1. LOGOS – *logic, reason, proof*

A structured speech – intro, arguments, conclusion

Facts, statistics, evidence = the *illusion* of truth.

Use logic to make your arguments. Present these arguments clearly and concisely. Use statistics, cite studies.

Know the common errors in thinking like [logical fallacies](#) and use them effectively in your refutation.

Know where the debate is headed before it starts.

Focus on the opposing side's position or argument. Knowing the “other side” is critical for preparing strategies to refute your opponent's arguments.

2. ETHOS – *credibility, trust*

Are you credible? Can we trust you? An appeal to the authority or credibility of the presenter – use authoritative sources – cite authoritative & credible sources. *Look* confident (even if you don't feel it!)

Speak from a place of certainty, authority, and accuracy.

In any discussion, the *appearance* of who is winning has an impact on the audience.

No matter what goes on *inside* your head, no matter which statistics go against you, or which of your points appear weak, your face should only reflect confidence.

If it doesn't feel natural, then fake it. With time, it will become natural. It's much better to actually know what you're talking about, but everyone occasionally stumbles into unfamiliar territory. In these situations, *confidence is key*.

3. PATHOS – *emotions, values*

An appeal to the audience's emotions. It can be in the form of metaphor, simile, a passionate delivery, or even a simple claim that a matter is unjust. Pathos is most effective when the author or speaker demonstrates agreement with an underlying *value of the listener* – know your audience & what will move them.

You may also use personal stories to invoke empathy from an audience. In addition, the speaker may use pathos to appeal to fear, imagination and hopes in order to sway the audience.



Examples of Ethos, Pathos and Logos

Logos

- "The data is perfectly clear: this investment has consistently turned a profit year-over-year, even in spite of market declines in other areas."
- "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: we have not only the fingerprints, the lack of an alibi, a clear motive, and an expressed desire to commit the robbery... We also have video of the suspect breaking in. The case could not be more open and shut."
- "It's a matter of common sense that people deserve to be treated equally. The Constitution calls it 'self-evident.' Why, then, should I have been denied a seat because of my disability?"
- "More than one hundred peer-reviewed studies have been conducted over the past decade, and none of them suggests that this is an effective treatment for hair loss."
- "History has shown time and again that absolute power corrupts absolutely."
- "Private demand for the product has tapered off for the past three years, and this year's sales figures are at an all-time low. It's time to research other options."
- "The algorithms have been run in a thousand different ways, and the math continues to check out."
- "You won't find any deer along this road. In 25 years of driving the same route, I haven't seen a single one."
- "He has a track record of success with this company, culminating in some of our most acclaimed architecture to date and earning us Firm of the Year nine times in a row."
- "Research compiled by analysts from NASA, as well as organizations from five other nations with space programs, suggests that a moon colony is viable with international support."

Ethos

- "As a doctor, I am qualified to tell you that this course of treatment will likely generate the best results."
- "My three decades of experience in public service, my tireless commitment to the people of this community, and my willingness to reach across the aisle and cooperate with the opposition, make me the ideal candidate for your mayor."
- "The veterinarian says that a German Shepherd will be the perfect match for our active lifestyle."
- "If my years as a Marine taught me anything, it's that caution is the best policy in this sort of situation."
- "You know me – I've taught Sunday School at your church for years, babysat your children, and served as a playground director for many summers – so you know I can run your preschool."
- "Our expertise in roofing contracting is evidenced not only by our 50 years in the business and our staff of qualified technicians, but in the decades of satisfied customers who have come to expect nothing but the best."
- "If my age doesn't convince you that I know what I'm talking about, at least consider that I am your grandfather and I only want the best for you."
- "Doctors all over the world recommend this type of treatment."
- "If you're still unsure, please consider that my advanced degree and field work speak for themselves."

Pathos

- "If we don't move soon, we're all going to die! Can't you see how dangerous it would be to stay?"
- "I'm not just invested in this community – I love every building, every business, every hard-working member of this town."
- "There's no price that can be placed on peace of mind. Our advanced security systems will protect the well-being of your family so that you can sleep soundly at night."
- "Where would we be without this tradition? Ever since our forefathers landed at Plymouth Rock, we've celebrated Thanksgiving without fail, making more than cherished recipes. We've made memories."
- "They've worked against everything we've worked so hard to build, and they don't care who gets hurt in the process. Make no mistake, they're the enemy, and they won't stop until we're all destroyed."
- "Don't be the last person on the block to have their lawn treated – you don't want to be the laughing stock of your community!"
- "You should consider another route if you leave later. I heard that that street is far more dangerous and ominous at night than during the daytime."
- "You'll make the right decision because you have something that not many people do: you have heart."
- "After years of this type of disrespect from your boss, countless hours wasted, birthdays missed... it's time that you took a stand."
- "Better men than us have fought and died to preserve this great nation. Now is our turn to return the favor. For God and country, gentlemen!"
- "You will never be satisfied in life if you don't seize this opportunity. Do you want to live the rest of your years yearning to know what would have happened if you just jumped when you had the chance?"

Understanding the different aspects of rhetoric will make you more aware of what goes into creating a persuasive argument. The examples above should also help you construct your own arguments or appeals.