

Persuasive Techniques

We use persuasive language to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking. There are many different ways to persuade people. Here are some of the more common:

Appeals: One persuasive technique is appealing to the audience's:

- Emotions
- Fears
- Desire to seem intelligent
- Need to protect their family
- Desire to fit in, to be accepted, to be loved
- Desire to be an individual
- Desire to follow a tradition
- Desire to be wealthy or save money
- Desire to be healthy
- Desire to look good
- Desire to protect animals and the environment
- Pride in our country

Often other persuasive techniques can also involve an appeal.

Evidence: Using evidence is very persuasive as it makes the reader see the author as knowledgeable and the argument as more logical or reliable.

Example: Statistics, expert opinions, research findings and anecdotal evidence.

Attacks: Attacks on opposing views, or the people who hold them can persuade the audience by portraying views and beliefs which are contrary to the author's contention as foolish, dangerous, uncaring or deceitful. Using humor to make fun of these views can be particularly persuasive. Note: can offend or alienate audience if overdone.

Example: 'Town Hall? *Clown Hall* if we consider the Mayor's latest comments.'

Inclusive and Exclusive Language: Inclusive language such as 'we', 'our', 'us' and exclusive language such as 'them' can persuade by including the reader, or by creating a sense of solidarity or a sense of responsibility.

Example: 'People like *you* and *me* don't want to see this happen'

Rhetorical Questions: Rhetorical questions are questions that do not require an answer and are asked for effect only. They engage the audience and encourage them to consider the issue and accept the author's answer, or imply that the answer is so obvious that anyone who disagrees is foolish.

Example: Do we want our children growing up in a world where they are threatened with violence on every street corner?

Cause and effect: arguments may claim there is a cause and effect relationship when really there is just a relationship and other factors should be considered.

Connotations: The connotation is the emotional meaning associated with the word. Persuasive authors often choose their words carefully so that the connotation suits their purpose.

Example (1) 'Kill' and 'Slaughter' both mean the same thing, but the word 'slaughter' has a different connotation to 'kill', as it causes the audience to imagine that the act was particularly horrific.

Example (2) 'Health issue' vs 'health crisis'

Example (3) 'Terrorist' vs 'freedom fighter'

Analogy: Analogy is a form of reasoning which compares one thing with another in order to make a particular point.

Example: School is like a prison and students are like prisoners.

Generalisations: Make sweeping statements about a whole group, based on only one or two members of that group. These can be persuasive if the audience believes the generalization is appropriate, but can undermine argument if they do not.

Example: A store manager might see one or two teenagers shoplifting, and write a letter to the editor claiming all teenagers steal and can't be trusted.

Humor: Humor, such as puns, irony, sarcasm, satire and jokes can be persuasive by dismissing opposing views, providing a more engaging and friendly tone, and sway an audience by having them enter into the joke.

Example: 'Totally *Artraged*' as a pun on 'Totally Outraged' when talking about controversial art.

Jargon: By using specialised terms, the author can persuade the audience that they are an expert.

Example: When announcing a recession whilst trying to save face a politician may call it '*period of economic adjustment*' or '*interruption of economic expansion*'.

Formal Language: Formal language can make the author sound knowledgeable while removing emotion from the issue. This can make the argument sound reasonable and rational, and the contention seem balanced.

Example: 'If we consider the situation in emergency wards, with increasingly low staff retention rates, there are concerns about the capacity of hospitals to maintain adequate doctor to patient ratios.'

Colloquial language: Colloquial language is informal, everyday, conversational language that includes down to earth views and is seductive because it appears friendly, and can make the audience feel that the author is on the same wavelength as them.

Example: "That totally *grossed me out*" vs. "That really disgusted me."

Repetition: By repeating letters, words and phrases the author can reinforce an argument and ensure that the point of view being made stays in an audience's mind.

Example: *Now is the time* to make real the promises of democracy. *Now is the time* to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. *Now is the time* to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. *Now is the time* to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

Hyperbole: The use of hyperbole emphasizes points by exaggerating. It can be used to mock opposing opinions, as a shock tactics technique, or an appeal to fears.

Example (1) Those who support this ridiculous idea would have us believe that it will dramatically improve the quality of life for modern living. *Of course it will! And it will probably bring about world peace, stop pollution, and make the trams run on time!*

Example (2) *Every weekend the city is overrun* by beggars

Alliteration and Assonance: The repetition of initial consonant sounds (alliteration) or vowel sounds (assonance) adds emphasis to major points and makes them more memorable.

Example: Sydney's slippery slide (alliteration)
The elite meet and greet (assonance)

Imagery and Figurative Language: use of figurative language, metaphor and simile can paint a word picture for audience, making the point visually and by comparison, or appeal to emotions. They can also make the author appear sophisticated or well spoken.

Example (1) Australia is a fabric woven of many colors (metaphor)

Example (2) Citizenship was thrown around like confetti (simile)

Example (3) Bodies were piled up in makeshift roadside graves and in gutters (imagery)

Images: Images can also be used to persuade the reader, either independently or used with an article. Consider:

Context: What is the issue?

Content: What is in the image? What is in the foreground and the background? What symbols or text is used? What colors are used?

Target: Who/ what is the visual directed at?

Message: What is the artist's message or contention? How does the content of the image persuade the reader to accept this contention?

TONE

- **Passionate**
- **Mocking**
- **Assured**
- **Reasonable**
- **Impersonal**
(showing no emotion)
- **Cheerful**
- **Forceful**
- **Arrogant**
(unpleasantly self-important)
- **Vindictive** (seeking revenge)
- **Calm**
- **Shocked**
- **Decisive** (conclusive)
- **Impartial** (not biased)
- **Respectful**
- **Pleading**
- **Sympathetic**
- **Jovial** (happy)
- **Apologetic**
- **Reasonable**
- **Indignant** (anger aroused by something unjust or mean)
- **Certain**
- **Wise**
- **Rational** (ability to reason, logical)
- **Balanced**
- **Objective** (not influenced to personal prejudice or emotions)
- **Confident**
- **Resentful** (bitter, angry)
- **Cautious**
- **Tolerant**
- **Impatient**
- **Aloof**
- **Angry**
- **Outraged**
- **Equitable** (just and fair)
- **Learned**
- **Admiring**
- **Bitter**
- **Antagonistic**
(opposing, hostility)
- **Forgiving**
- **Restrained**
- **Satirical** (attack through irony, ridicule)
- **Plaintive** (expressing sorrow)
- **Authoritative**
- **Detached** (no emotional involvement)
- **Optimistic** (positive)
- **Complaining**
- **Neutral**
- **Ingratiating**
(ungrateful)
- **Disappointed**
- **Sceptical** (Doubts, questions, disagrees)
- **Chauvinistic**
(exaggerated or aggressive patriotism—that ones group is superior (surely!))
- **Endearing**
- **Guarded**
- **Insulting**
- **Persuasive**
- **Quizzical**
- **Controlled**
- **Despondent** (lost all hope)
- **Earnest** (serious)
- **Facetious** (intending to be amusing)
- **Biting**
- **Embittered** (aroused bitter feelings)
- **Indifferent**
(showing lack of interest)
- **matter of fact**
- **ponderous**
- **sarcastic**
- **sensitive**
- **aggressive**
- **Appalled**
- **Critical**
- **Fervent** (intense, strong)
- **Insensitive**
- **Pensive** (deep in thought)
- **Querulous**
(complaining)
- **Sardonic** (bitterly mocking or cynical)
- **Condescending**
(pretending to be on equal terms while maintaining an attitude of superiority)
- **Cynical** (pessimistic view)
- **Ardent** (eager passionate)
- **Forthright**
(outspoken, straightforward)
- **Dogmatic** (arrogant, assertive)
- **Frivolous** (not serious, silly)
- **Cautious**
- **Conservative**
- **Demeaning**
- **Admonishing**
(telling off)
- **Chiding** (subtle, nagging)
- **Judgmental**