Essay Appeals

Appeal is how you, as a writer, connect to your readers in an effort to persuade them and develop your essay. It is especially important in argumentative/persuasive essays. The basic forms of appeal track back all the way to the ancient Greeks; they are *logos, pathos,* and *ethos*.

**Logos**: This is an appeal to logic, which relies on reason. Basically, does what you are saying make sense? Usually these arguments are evidenced by precedents (examples from the past), facts, statistics, expert testimony, and clear, specific, reasonable argumentation.

**Pathos**: This is an appeal to emotion—to the beliefs and feelings of the audience. For an emotional appeal to be successful it must be appropriate for the topic, audience and the argument. It must not misjudge readers’ actual feelings. It must be intellectually honest by not raising emotional issues that are irrelevant to the argument. This type of appeal is more common in non-academic writing. Consider the tone of your voice in your writing, especially the connotations of your word choices. Is it more effective to be serious or light, even humorous? How formal should your language be to best connect to the reader on that topic? Can you use imagery and description to connect to the reader? Can you pace the writing to meet the feeling of your message?

**Ethos**: This is an appeal to ethics. In many ways it is a combination of emotional and logical appeals. An ethical appeal relies on the readers’ ability to **trust the writer**. That trust is developed by the writer proving that he/she is a fair, competent, rational thinker and one with expertise on *all* perspectives of the subject. An ethical writer is intellectually honest, does not use inappropriate emotional appeals, and develops a sincere and appropriate tone through his/her use of language. Use jargon appropriately. Follow recognized conventions and formats. Avoid insulting/biased words, sarcasm, and exclamation points (!).

An essay will potentially use all of these appeals but in different ways. An academic essay, for example, will rely more heavily on logos, while a personal essay could be more reliant on pathos. As a writer, again, ask yourself: What kind of essay are you writing? Why are you writing it? And who are you writing it for? Your appeal should match your thesis and development.

Read the following and identify what type of appeal the writer is using.

Advertising should show more physically challenged people. The hundreds of thousands of disabled Canadians have considerable buying power, yet so far advertisers have made no attempt to tap that power. Further, by keeping the physically challenged out of the mainstream depicted in ads, advertisers encourage widespread prejudice against disability, prejudice that frightens and demeans those who hold it.

The second sentence offers a logical appeal. The third sentence offers an emotional appeal. It is common to use all kinds of appeals but be especially careful and intellectually honest with your use of emotional appeals and the language they require.

Also, check out this video of how advertising uses these principles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmR58_dqLxY>