



# Rhetorical Strategies for the SAT Essay

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# Rhetorical Triangle



## Logos

Appeals to logical reasoning.  
How does the author use  
logic to construct his  
argument?



## Ethos

Appeals to authority, ethics,  
morals, ideology, or  
doctrine.  
What sources does the  
author use to build  
credibility?



## Pathos

Appeals to emotion; often  
more informal  
How does the author use  
emotion to connect with his  
audience?

# Logos

- ▶ When analyzing the author's logic, it is important to specify what reasoning is being used.
- ▶ There are many different kinds of logical reasoning.

# Inductive reasoning (Logos)



“Inductive reasoning is a method of reasoning in which the premises are viewed as supplying *some* evidence for the truth of the conclusion”



Related to mathematical induction.



What are some problems with this reasoning?

# Deductive Reasoning (Logos)

“Deductive reasoning is the process of reasoning from one or more statements (premises) to reach a logically certain conclusion.”

Most common and strong type of logic.

What are some benefits of deductive reasoning over inductive reasoning?

# *Reductio Ad Absurdum*

Literally means “reduced to absurdity”.

“*Reduction ad absurdum* is a form of argument that attempts either to disprove a statement by showing it inevitably leads to a ridiculous, absurd, or impractical conclusion, or to prove one by showing that if it were not true, the result would be absurd or impossible.”

Deductive reasoning and *reduction ad absurdum* often go hand in hand.

# Fallacious Reasoning (Logos)

**Fallacious Reasoning** is any sort of reasoning that is false or contains a false premise.

Example: assuming the converse is true.

If I'm playing in the World Cup, then I'm playing soccer. If I'm playing soccer, then I'm playing in the World Cup.

Also called a non-sequitur (specifically an invalid deductive argument).

# Ad Hominem (Logos)



“*Ad hominem* is a fallacious argumentative strategy whereby genuine discussion of the topic at hand is avoided by instead attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself.”



Instead of arguing against the idea, the writer argues against the individual.



In simple terms, an *ad hominem* attack is saying “you’re stupid” instead of “your idea is stupid.”



# Other Fallacious Reasonings (Logos)

## Circular Reasoning

- Using what you want to show to show what you want to show.

## Red Herring

- “A **red herring** is something that misleads or distracts from a relevant or important question.”

## Straw Man

- “A **straw man** is a form of argument and an informal fallacy based on giving the impression of refuting an opponent's argument, while actually refuting an argument that was not presented by that opponent.”

# Ethos

- ▶ Ethos builds credibility.
- ▶ Appeals to:
  - ▶ Authority
  - ▶ Ethics
  - ▶ Morals
  - ▶ Ideology
  - ▶ Doctrine

# Aphorisms (Ethos)

Sayings that contain truth.

Maxims.

Examples:

- “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”
- “If you want a thing done well, do it yourself.”

# Appeal to Authority (Ethos)



In general, any citation will be an appeal to authority.



Appeals to authority defer responsibility to another party.



Examples of appeals:

Citing a scientific study.

Citing a government organization.

Expert citations.

## Appeal to Authority, Continued (Ethos)

Often, citations will provide quantifiable evidence.

Can't argue with numbers that come from a credible source.

# Rhetorical Questions (Ethos)

A rhetorical question is a question which is not answered; it is left open.

Encourages reflection on the reader's part.

This leads to self-persuasion.

# Pathos

- ▶ Pathos is the last side of the rhetorical triangle.
- ▶ It is also the weakest.
- ▶ Appeals to emotions and is often informal.

# Some Examples of Pathos



Anecdotal  
evidence

Personal experience  
can be a powerful  
motivator.



Pathos appeals  
evoke:

Pity  
Shame  
Empathy  
Sense of duty



Often includes a rallying cry or a  
call to action.



# Ways to Use Pathos



Allusion

Passing reference.



Diction or imagery

How does the author paint a mental image? How does his word choice paint a mental image?



Hyperbole

Exaggeration, not meant to be taken literally.



Personification

Easier to empathize with humans than inanimate objects or animals.

# Ways to Use Pathos, Continued

## Oxymoron

- Contradiction.

## Repetition

- Hearing it over and over can eventually convince someone.