

2.3 Writing To Persuade

Sometimes, you may want to persuade your reader to take a particular action or position on an issue. To be effective, you should consider the following elements of persuasion, often referred to as Rhetorical Appeals. The ancient Greek words are *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos*. These concepts are still critical in rhetoric studies today (see **Figure 2.3.1**):

- ***Ethos* – Appeal to Credibility/Authority:** this element of persuasion involves establishing your credibility, expertise, or authority to be making the argument. What experience or expertise do you have? What knowledge or skills do you possess? What’s your role within the organization, and/or in relation to the reader? Why should the reader trust you as a reliable, knowledgeable, authoritative, and ethical source of information?
- ***Pathos* – Appeal to Emotion/Interest/Values:** this element involves appealing to the emotions, values, and/or interests of the reader. How does your proposal benefit them? Why should they care about it? How does it relate to the goals of the organization? How can you build “common ground” with your reader? What will make your reader feel “good” about your project? How can you evoke emotions such as pride or outrage?
- ***Logos* – Appeal to Reason/Logic:** this element involves grounding your argument in logic, reason, and evidence. What evidence supports your claims? On what facts and data is your reasoning based? Arguments grounded in reason and evidence are often considered the strongest. Government organizations and companies alike generally like to make “evidence-based decisions.”
- ***Kairos* – Appeal to Timeliness/Appropriateness:** using this appeal means being aware of what is appropriate and timely in a given rhetorical situation. Sometimes, a well-crafted argument can fail because it comes at the wrong time. *Kairos* involves knowing what is “in” or “hot” right now, what is an important topic or issue, and how best to discuss it; knowing when it is the “right time” to broach a topic or propose an idea; knowing how to use the appropriate tone, level of formality and decorum for the specific situation.

Finding the appropriate blend of appeals is critical to making a successful argument; consider that when making your case, you often have to “win both hearts and minds”—so you’ll need to appeal to both emotions and logic, do whatever you can to show the reader that you are a trustworthy source of information, and present your argument at the most opportune time. In addition to these elements, you should also be mindful of the word choice and tone so that you are presenting a persuasive argument that is also constructive and conveys the appropriate tone for your intended audience, message, and purpose.