

In this excerpt, Eliana Dockterman presents a careful and well-reasoned argument for exposing children to technology at an early age. She presents both hard statistical evidence and a qualitative point about economic competitiveness to justify her claim. Further, Dockterman uses a powerful rhetorical technique: anticipate potential counterarguments against her claim, then address them using evidence. The combined effect of these techniques is to create the impression of a logical, authoritative stance.

Much of Dockterman's case relies on statistics. She points out that kids who played a certain puzzle game "did 12% better on logic tests than those who did not," which tells the reader that the use of technology has been quantitatively shown to improve children's thinking abilities, and therefore that the use of such technology is a positive. She strengthens this reasoning by showing that the cognitive benefits are not limited to logic — playing Civilization ~~was~~ was "directly linked to an improvement in the quality of (students') history-class reports." This evidence shows that the use of technology has demonstrated benefits in several different curricular areas. By presenting these examples, Dockterman begins to convince the reader that exposure to technology has robust, measurable benefits across the board.

Dockterman makes these statistics more persuasive by proposing a mechanism to explain them. She writes that "students can remember only 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear and 50% of what they see demonstrated," but contrasts these figures with retention rates involving technology, which "skyrockets to 90%." The fact that students retain more information when they learn with technology is already a strong point in favor of Dockterman's thesis. But this evidence also explains why students performed better on logic and history tasks in the previously-mentioned studies. The reader now feels that he understands the reason why technology leads to increased cognitive performance - namely, engagement - rather than only knowing that this is true. In knowing why, the audience becomes more convinced of this central claim that early exposure to technology should be encouraged.

The essay uses persuasive elements to establish credibility. For instance, Dockterman tells the reader that "barely half of US parents" agree with her claim, and discusses a school administrator who "doesn't see any benefits" to technology. After acknowledging these potential objections to her claim, Dockterman gives strong counterarguments - she appeals to an expert opinion, namely an anthropologist who studies young adults' use of

technology, who describes benefits including "engaging with specialized communities of interest." ~~she does~~
~~asker back on the potential counterarguments by~~
The anthropologist goes on to argue that "a two-hour screen-time limit is an outdated concept," which shows the reader that this objection to the benefits of technology may be ill-founded. Dockterman also quotes a public school principal who argues that students will be "left behind" if they're "not exposed to this stuff early," which directly addresses the criticism from the Waldorf school administrator earlier in the article.

This persuasive technique leads the audience to trust Dockterman's reasoning. If she had presented a more one-sided argument, only citing sources that advance her ~~own~~ claim of the benefits of technology, then the reader might feel that her perspective is biased and begin to think of counterarguments. Instead, Dockterman lays out these counterarguments from the start and frames the issue in a balanced way, even asking "So who's right - the mom trying to protect her kids from the perils of new technology or the dad who's coaching his kids to embrace it?" This strategy makes the reader believe that Dockterman is unbiased, intellectually honest, and trustworthy, which makes the remainder of her argument more convincing.

In summation, Dockterman succeeds in arguing that children benefit from early exposure to technology. She gains the reader's trust by presenting a balanced view, describing arguments both for and against early technology use, and then authoritatively argues in favor. She uses statistical results from studies, credible quotations from experts, and a proposed mechanism which explains why student use of technology produces its benefits. In doing this, Dockterman makes a cogent and even-handed defense of her thesis.