Persuasive acts: People post blogs for a variety of reasons – to inform readers about some fact in the news, to update readers about events in their life, or to complain about something that happened to them, etc. One additional reason is to try to persuade their reader about something.

For purposes of this task, we are interested in identifying whether or not a blog contains a blatant Persuasive act; that is, whether at any point in the blog the author is obviously and directly trying to persuade the reader to believe something, to have a particular opinion about something, or to adopt or refrain from some course of action. As examples, the author might be trying to get the reader to believe American health care is ineffective, to hold a negative opinion about a particular product, or to vote for a particular politician.

We are looking for obvious and blatant Persuasive acts. That means that the poster isn't trying to hide his/her attempt to persuade the audience and that you're very certain that this is poster's goal. In general, make sure that you are not marking as Persuasive acts texts that are either ambiguous or subtle, because these are places where we have found rather major inter-annotator disagreement. Here are five concrete heuristics to follow that we have found to help:

1) Retelling of an attempt to persuade someone does not count as a Persuasive act.

2) Retelling of how the poster felt in a situation does not count as a Persuasive act.

3) If you cannot identify a target of persuasion nor a topic, then there is no Persuasive act. Persuasive acts have an intended audience, and with blogs that audience can be particular readers or general readers; both of these are valid for this task.

4) If the poster seems to presuppose that the reader already agrees with him/her, then there is no Persuasive act.

5) If you are unsure, then it's not a Persuasive act.

What Persuasion is Not: Persuasion requires some form of **justification** on the part of the poster in order to convince their reader. This means that claims of fact or opinion aren't persuasion unless the poster provides reasoning/evidence/further argumentation. In other words, a statement like "*American health care is the most ineffective in the world.*" isn't a Persuasive act unless the poster provides something else to try to convince a skeptical reader (e.g., "*American health care is the most ineffective in the world. The World Health Organization ranks it as the most expensive, but mortality rates are not significantly lower than other countries.*").

      Similarly, rants (where a person simply complains about someone or something) or unjustified suggestions aren't Persuasive acts either. Here's an example of a post with rants and suggestions, but no Persuasive acts:

Ok, some quick suggestions and observations (Can't spend my life on this thing)... Go see Avenue Q. If you like Turkish food and you're in the city, try Sip Sak, but don't order the Lamb & Okra. Get a salad or something grilled. What was I thinking? Okra? Gap clothes fit better than Banana Rep and Express this fall, for all you metros out there. Esquire magazine is amazing. Chuck Klosterman's in it this month, Akron boy done good. August 2nd New Yorker is worth checking out. New terror alert a little unnerving. Islamist extremists want Bush to win election. His idiocy and aggression stir moderate people into action. Ok. No more rant.

Common Justifications Included in Persuasive acts: While it's hard to capture every tactic someone may use in a Persuasive act, here are some common techniques people use when trying to convince someone:

- discuss the **outcome** of an event
  - **good** or **bad** consequences of some event
  - how people will perceive the reader
  - how the reader will perceive themselves

- appeal to the beliefs, statements, or opinions of **experts**, **important people**, and the **famous**, or **popular opinion**

- provide arguments phrased in terms of **morals**, **duties,** or **generalizations** about how people (or some group of people) behave

- appeal to the reader's sense of **empathy** with another (perhaps the poster)

- tell the reader that time is **short**, or that the situation could **quickly change**

- **redefine**, **reframe**, or **analogize** the issue as something else

You won't see all of these (or, perhaps, any of them) in a post you might consider a Persuasive act, but they are examples of the kinds of justifications people will provide in such situations.