



## The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Introduction

- The art of persuasion—getting others to do something or to think as you do—is a part of daily life.
- Persuasion may involve convincing a friend to see a movie with you or bargaining over the cost of a comic book at a flea market.
- Persuasion sometimes is oral, sometimes visual, sometimes written, and often a combination of all these elements.
- Persuasion is often a part of various types of writing, as well as a type of writing itself.
- For example, a character in a short story may speak persuasively to a group of friends, or a poem may contain a plea to readers about an important issue.
- Persuasive writing gives you an opportunity to make your voice heard and to express your opinion on an issue about which you feel strongly.

**For the Teacher:** Use this lesson in conjunction with the lesson on persuasive advertising. Each can be used independently, but if both are used, this one should come first.

**For the Student:** Enjoy this most useful lesson in getting others to do what you need or want. Keep in mind that the object is to *win* people over to your way of thinking, not to browbeat them into submission.

### Contents:

Persuasive Writing	Power Point Presentation
Persuasive Writing—Definitions	Word
Persuasive Writing—Prewriting	Word
Persuasive Writing—Drafting	Word
Persuasive Writing—Revising	Word
Persuasive Writing—Editing and Proofreading, Publishing and Presenting	Word
Persuasive Writing—Self-Assessment Rubric	Word
Persuasive Essay Assignments	Word





## The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Definitions

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- For example, a character in a short story may speak persuasively to a group of friends, or a poem may contain a plea to readers about an important issue.
  
- Persuasive writing gives you an opportunity to make your voice heard and to express your opinion on an issue about which you feel strongly.
- A **persuasive essay** is a piece of writing that tries to convince readers to accept a particular viewpoint or to take a certain action.
- Most effective persuasive essays contain
  - A clearly stated opinion or argument on an issue that has more than one side.
  - Evidence to support the opinion or argument.
  - Memorable and convincing details and vivid, persuasive language.
  - An effective, logical organization.
  
- Types of persuasive writing:
  - **Editorials** and **letters to the editor** appear in newspapers. Editorials express the newspaper's stand on a current issue; letters to the editor present readers' viewpoints.
  - **Persuasive speeches** are an oral form of a persuasive essay. They often contain allusions and sound devices to make them stirring and memorable.
  - **Position papers** address one side of a controversial issue. They are often directed at a person or group with some power to shape policy on a particular issue.
  - **Grant proposals** make a request for financing a program or a project of the writer's. They are usually addressed to members of a government agency or private corporation.





# The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Prewriting

## Choosing/Generating Your Topic

- To write a powerful persuasive essay, start with a topic that is important to you.
- For help in generating topics, use the strategies below:
  - **Scan Newspapers**, looking for stories that matter to you on a personal level. What do you see that makes you angry, strikes you as unfair, or cries out “this needs to be changed”? Use one of the news stories to provide you with a topic for your persuasive essay.
  - **Make a Quicklist:**
    - Come up with a topic for your persuasive writing by listing types of issues.
    - For example, write headings like *Community Issues*, *Political Issues*, and *Social Issues* at the top of a sheet of paper, and quickly list ideas inspired by each.
    - Review your lists, and choose the issue that interests you most as the topic of your persuasive essay.
  - **Use Sentence Starters:**
    - To come up with a topic, copy the following sentence starters and fill in the blanks.
    - Then, review your completed sentences
    - Choose one issue as the topic of your persuasive essay.
    - If I became (mayor/president/school principal), the first thing I would do is \_\_\_?\_\_.
    - Something that needs to be changed at this school is \_\_\_?\_\_\_.
- If you are having difficulty finding a suitable topic for your persuasive piece, use one of the following:
  - **Persuasive Speech**—Choose a global issue—child labor laws or deforestation, for example—about which you would like to take a stand. Write and deliver a persuasive speech in which you support your opinion.
  - **Persuasive Essay**—Write an essay in which you support one candidate over another. Candidates may be actual, perhaps someone running for student council president, or imaginary, as in Hero of the year.
  - Teenagers today should \_\_\_?\_\_\_.
- **Responding to Fine Art**—Study a piece of art such as *Arrivals and Departures* by Chester Arnold (see <http://www.artnet.com/artwork/41385/chester-arnold-arrivals-and-departures.html>)
  - Determine what you think the artist's message is.
  - Then, write a persuasive essay in which you agree or disagree with that message.





## The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Prewriting

- **Responding to Literature**—Read a story such as Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" that is set in a technologically advanced world.
  - Draw on its images to write a persuasive essay on the effects of technology on our lives.
- **Cooperative Writing Opportunity—Editorial Page**—Most newspapers contain an editorial page on which appear editorials, cartoons, and letters to the editor.
  - Work with a small group to prepare an editorial page about a particular issue.
  - Then, assign one student to conduct a survey about the issue, another to write a letter to the editor about the issue, and another to draw a cartoon about the issue.
  - When finished, work together to lay out the editorial page.
  - Photocopy your completed project, and distribute it to classmates.

### Narrowing Your Topic

- Once you've chosen a general topic, narrow it into one you can argue effectively.
- **Looping** is one strategy you can use to ensure that your topic isn't too broad.
  - Write freely on your general topic for about 5 minutes.
  - Read what you have written. Circle the most important idea.
  - Write freely on that idea for about five minutes.
  - Repeat the process until you have found a topic that is narrow enough to address in your persuasive essay.
  - If you keep writing, you may even be able to identify a thesis statement, a main idea, that you want your persuasive essay to communicate.

### Considering Your Audience and Purpose

- As you draft, identify your audience and their opinions. This will help you achieve your purpose—to persuade them.
- **Write for Various Audiences.** A hostile audience is one that will not be immediately receptive to your argument. A friendly audience is one that is likely to be more sympathetic. Depending on whether you expect your audience to be hostile, friendly, or a mix, vary your argument accordingly
  - **EXAMPLE:** Imagine that you are writing an editorial calling for a ban on bicycle traffic from a park pathway.
    - **Hostile Audience: Bicycle Riders**—Emphasize alternative paths that would remain available for people who ride bicycles.





## The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Prewriting

- **Friendly Audience: Families with Small Children**—Emphasize the dangers that are posed when bikes and pedestrians mix.
- Ultimately, you hope your persuasive writing will change the thinking or behavior of your audience.
- To do so, choose details that will lead your audience to think or behave in a certain way.
- A **purpose planner** can help you achieve your particular goals.

### Gathering Details

- You'll need facts and details from a variety of sources to support your position. Follow these strategies as you gather the evidence you need:
  - **Find Unbiased Research**—The foundation of an effective persuasive essay should contain reliable evidence in support of its position.
    - Evidence from biased or unreliable sources will weaken your argument.
    - As you perform research for your editorial, find sources of information that are objective and bias-free.
  - **Conduct Interviews**—For some issues, the most powerful evidence you can use to support your argument is evidence that you collect yourself.
    - Interview an expert in that field.
    - His or her words will prove more persuasive than a quotation from an unqualified person.
  - **Make a Pro-and-Con Chart**—Make a chart to help you see both sides of an issue.
    - In the left column, list your arguments, or “pros”; in the right column, list your arguments, or “cons.”
    - When it is complete, note the evidence in the “Opposing” column. Brainstorm for ways to counter-argue the evidence listed there.





## Revising Your Overall Structure

- Once you've completed your first draft, make sure that it contains the details needed to be effective.
- Also, check to be sure that you develop and support your argument in the body of your paper.
- **Color-Coding to Identify Support**—Reread your essay to see whether you have included enough supporting details to make your argument successful.
  - As you read, use a colored pencil to circle each topic sentence.
  - Then, use a different-colored pencil to circle supporting details.
  - Next, review your markings. If a topic sentence has fewer than two supporting details, add more evidence to support it or reconsider whether the point is worth including.

## Revising Your Paragraphs

- Make the main points in your essay memorable by using **parallelism**—the use of patterns or repetitions of grammatical structures.
- Parallelism adds rhythm and balance to your writing.
- Use it to emphasize important points and to forge links between related ideas.
- To form parallel structures in your draft, locate an important word, phrase, clause, or question.
- Then, experiment with building upon that word, phrase, clause, or question to make it into a passage containing parallelism.
- Check out the following examples:
  - **Parallel Questions:** Who will step up first? Who will lead the way? Who will win the day?
  - **Parallel Phrases:** Respect for others shows itself not only in our action but also in our language and in our private thoughts.
  - **Parallel Clauses:** Although we strive for greatness, although we work hard, although we deserve the best, sometimes, it's just not enough.  
If you care, if you can, and if you will, lend a hand now.
- A **clause** is a group of words with its own subject and verb.
- One way to make your persuasive essay memorable is by adding **parallel clauses**.
- These are clauses within a sentence that have matching grammatical forms or patterns.
- Following are some tips for revising your sentences to form parallel clauses:
  - Make sure that the verbs in each clause are in the same tense.







## The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Revising

- **Wrong:** The Garden Group planted, the Garden Group hoed, the Garden Group was persevering and the Garden Group triumphed.
- **Right:** The Garden Group planted, the Garden Group hoed, the Garden Group persevered, and the Garden Group triumphed.
- Don't change the subject in subsequent clauses.
  - **Wrong:** After his efforts on our behalf, after Matt's sacrifices on our behalf, and after his achievements on our behalf, isn't it time to elect him president of the class?
  - **Right:** After Matt's efforts on our behalf, after his sacrifices on our behalf, and after his achievements on our behalf, isn't it time to elect him president of the class?
- Always use the same type of subordinate clause:
  - **Wrong:** The corporation will sponsor only those projects that are worthy and it thinks have a chance at winning awards.
  - **Right:** The corporation will sponsor only those projects that are worthy and that might win awards.
- As you revise your essay look for two examples of parallel clauses. If you cannot identify any, revise to insert them.

### Revising Your Sentences

- **Add Variety to your Sentences**—Writing is much more persuasive if it is interesting.
- One way to add interest to your writing is to use a variety of sentence types and lengths.
- Review your draft, and analyze the sentences you have used.
- If you tend to use too many sentences of one type and of one average length, revise to make your writing more interesting to read and hear.
- Use this strategy to analyze the sentence variety in your writing:
  - Read through your essay. Underline declarative sentences in red, interrogative sentences in green, exclamatory sentences in blue, and imperative sentences in black.
  - Review the underlined material. If you have little or no variety in sentence types, revise to make your writing more interesting.





### Revising Your Word Choice

- **Revise Informal Language**—The words you choose can influence the power of your essay.
  - Using slang and informal language can mean that your writing may not be taken seriously.
  - Instead, use formal language that reflects the seriousness of your topic.
- **Peer Review—Point/Counterpoint**—Anticipating counterarguments can strengthen your editorial:
  - Share your revised draft with a partner who takes on the role of the opposition.
  - Together, make a list of the main points in your writing.
  - Then ask your partner to come up with counterpoints, or opposing arguments for these points.
  - When your partner has finished, find evidence to weaken the opposition's argument.
  - Incorporate that evidence into your draft to strengthen your own argument.





# The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Editing & Proofreading, Publishing & Presenting

## Editing & Proofreading

- Before you revise your final draft, proofread your writing and correct errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Your readers will equate careless writing with a careless argument.
- Make sure that your persuasive essay is free of spelling errors.
- As you proofread, look for words you frequently misspell, as well as words with tricky endings, such as *-ance* and *-ence*.
  - Word endings that sound similar are sometimes difficult to spell. Among the most misspelled word endings are *-ance* and *-ence*.
  - If a noun ends in *-ance*, the corresponding adjective will end in *-ant*. If the noun ends in *-ence*, the corresponding adjective will end in *-ent*.
  - As you proofread your essay, check to be sure that you have spelled words ending in *-ance* and *-ence* correctly.
  - **Common Words Ending in *-ance*:** abundance; acquaintance; appearance; brilliance; defiance; importance; radiance; resonance; romance; tolerance
  - **Common Words Ending in *-ence*:** absence; convenience; correspondence; difference; excellence; independence; patience; presence; reference; violence

## Publishing & Presenting

- Building Your Portfolio—The purpose of persuasive writing is to influence your audience.
- To achieve this goal, find a way to share your work with others.
- Following are a few possibilities for presenting your finished work:
  - **School Paper**—If the topic of your persuasive writing is school- or community-related, publish it in your school newspaper.
  - **Local Newspaper**—The editorial page of your local newspaper is a place to make your voice heard. Contact the paper for the proper procedures for submitting a letter to the editor and revise your writing to conform to the newspaper's guidelines.
- Once you have completed your persuasive essay, reflect on the experience of writing it.
- Answer the following questions, and record your responses in your portfolio:
  - What did you discover about your topic as you wrote about it?
  - What did you learn about the process of writing persuasively?
  - Can you apply what you learned to other types of writing?





# The Writing Process—Persuasive Writing—Rubric for Self-Assessment

## Persuasive Writing Rubric for Self-Assessment

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Score 4</b>	<b>Score 3</b>	<b>Score 2</b>	<b>Score 1</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
<b>Audience and Purpose</b>	Demonstrates effective word choice; clearly states focus on persuasive task	Demonstrates good word choice; states focus on persuasive task	Shows some good word choices; minimally states focus on persuasive task	Shows lack of attention to persuasive task	
<b>Organization</b>	Uses clear, consistent organizational strategy	Uses clear organizational strategy with occasional inconsistencies	Uses inconsistent organizational strategy; illogically presented	Lacks organizational strategy	
<b>Elaboration</b>	Provides specific, well-elaborated reasons that support the writer's position	Provides two or more moderately elaborated reasons to support the writer's position	Provides several reasons, but only one is elaborated	Provides no specific reasons or elaboration	
<b>Use of Language</b>	Uses many transitions to provide clarity of expression; has very few mechanical errors	Uses some transitions to help flow of ideas; has few mechanical errors	Uses few transitions; does not connect well; has many mechanical errors	Fails to connect ideas; has many mechanical errors.	





# Exposition—Persuasion—Assignment

## Persuasive Essay

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Choose one of the following options and write a 5-paragraph essay. At the bottom of this sheet, write your full thesis first, then write your best -yet essay. Make sure to give it a title.*

1. Choose a global issue—child labor laws or deforestation, for example—about which you would like to take a stand. Write a persuasive speech in which you support your opinion.
2. Write an essay in which you support one candidate over another. Candidates may be actual, perhaps someone running for student association president, or imaginary, as in Hero of the Year.
3. Write an editorial for the school newspaper about a policy or issue that needs to be changed at school. Remember, your object is to persuade, so be constructive with your criticism and suggestions.
4. You want your parents to let you go out with this certain someone. Write an essay persuading them of the merits of dating in general and dating this person specifically.

