

Essays - 8

Argument and Persuasion

- Each instructor develops her or his own assignments. Your instructor and the assignment sheet s/he has provided are the two best sources for guidance as you work toward a final draft. The handouts/tutorials for the types of essays feature general guidelines to help you write solid essays, but they should be treated only as supplements to your instructor and the assignment sheet.

Purpose

- To convince an audience that agrees with you on a debatable topic to take action.

Topic

- As with the position paper you likely wrote, the broad topic here is a debatable issue. The specific topic for a persuasive paper is the need for action. While not mandatory (unless your instructor says it is...), identifying and arguing in favor of a specific action could help drive your paper.

Example: *Sharon will write a paper about creative writing on campus, specifically the need to increase its profile.*

Example: *Sharon will write a paper about campus involvement in student athletics, specifically attendance to games and events.*

Audience

- This time, your audience agrees with your position, but they need you to motivate them to act in accordance with your shared beliefs. It is easy enough to agree with an idea intellectually, to hold a view that you would be willing to defend logically. It is another matter all together to turn that belief into action.

Example: *Sharon's audience is Sam students who write fiction or poetry.*

Example: *Sharon's audience is Sam students, primarily non-commuters.*

Thesis


- Try to capture the overall message of your paper. So-and-so should do such-and-such.

Example: *Creative writers at Sam must take action to earn an audience for their work because A, B, C.*

Example: *Resident Sam Houston students must take action/should attend Sam Houston athletic sporting events because A, B, C.*

Argumentation

(For more on argumentation, see our handout: Rhetorical Appeals)


 **Ethos** – Arguing for a position by appealing to its credibility or ethicality. Ethos is usually expressed by an appeal to authority or an ethical argument.

Example: *Sam Houston's Director of Athletics is quoted as saying...*


As the Director of Athletics is an authority on Sam Houston sports, his position adds credibility to the argument.

Example: *Graduating Sam Houston students will represent the university for the rest of their professional lives. Therefore, they should attend sporting events and represent their university during their academic years.*


As students will forever carry the name of the institution they graduate from, they have an ethical obligation to participate in that institution.


 **Logos** – While not the primary mode of persuasion for this paper, logic is the foundation of the belief you share with your audience. You are persuading people to do something that makes logical sense. So the author should make use of logical desirable effects.

Example: *Student involvement will generate more revenue for the school, create team spirit, confidence, and school unity.*

 **Pathos** – Whereas logic is only a way to check the sense of your position and the action you propose. An emotional appeal is the way to move that logical audience to do something.


Example: *Students that attend will feel a more intimate camaraderie with the university community, and they will be able to share in the thrill of winning.*

 **Narratives** – Break your reader's heart, inspire her, enrage her through a story. Be precise and economical in your telling of that story, to maximize its effectiveness. Think about how moved you have been after watching a particularly emotional scene in a movie or on TV.

 **Descriptions** – Create sensations for your reader: give her sights, smells, sounds, and feelings designed to instigate action.

Research

(For more on find sources, see our handout: Research and Sources)

 On a university campus, knowing what you are talking about always helps. If there is something you need to know about your topic, learn it. Of particular interest here: Is there research that backs up your belief that a given action will actually produce desirable results?