

- Facts and statistics can be compelling evidence. Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to think of a topic of interest and conduct a survey or poll across the class, grade or school. After the results are tallied, have students assess and share what the facts indicate about their topics.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.webenglishteacher.com/argument.html](http://www.webenglishteacher.com/argument.html)  
An annotated list of Internet resources and activities to teach and practice persuasive writing.
- [www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=268](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=268)  
Developed by the National Council of Teachers of English, this web site provides materials and lesson plans to teach how to select and research a topic for a persuasive essay.
- [www.kent.k12.wa.us/curriculum/writing/sec\\_writing/persuasivewritesites.htm](http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/curriculum/writing/sec_writing/persuasivewritesites.htm)  
An annotated list of lesson-planning and student-friendly web sites on persuasive writing.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Kemper, Dave, Ruth Nathan & Patrick Sebranek. *Writer's Express: A Handbook for Young Writers, Thinkers and Learners*. Great Source Education Group, Wilmington, MA; 2000.
- Venolia, Jan. *Kids Write Right!: What You Need to Be a Writing Powerhouse*. Tricycle Press, Berkeley, CA; 2000.
- Young, Sue K. *Writing with Style*. Scholastic, New York, NY; 1999.

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#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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#### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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| • CREATIVE & NARRATIVE WRITING | • WRITING EXPOSITORY ESSAYS              |
| • EDITING & PROOFREADING       | • WRITING FOR FORMAL & INFORMAL PURPOSES |
| • USING THE WRITING PROCESS    | • WRITING PERSUASIVE ESSAYS              |
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# WRITING

for Students »

## Writing Persuasive Essays

### Grades 5–9

Throughout their academic careers and life itself, students need to be able to communicate their thoughts clearly in writing, and to do so, they need to practice and master the skills necessary to write effectively for many different purposes and audiences. *Writing for Students* reinforces the idea that the craft of writing is a flexible and individual process, with stages that overlap or recur depending on the writer as well as on the type of writing he or she is doing. The series also illustrates multiple strategies for students to improve their own writing, from composing a focused thesis statement to organizing supporting evidence to revising to applying writing conventions through careful proofreading and editing. Through writing, students can acquire a deeper understanding of their topic. Knowing how to shape words on paper to convey ideas in a coherent and compelling manner provides students with a powerful tool towards becoming critical thinkers and lifelong learners.



## Content Overview

Writers use persuasive writing to convince readers to accept and agree with their opinions on controversial topics. In the thesis statement, a writer states his or her position — an argument, claim or assertion — either in favor of (pro) or against (con) a particular topic. The body paragraphs offer credible evidence that supports the central argument, including facts and statistics, expert testimony, detailed examples, personal experience, observations and interviews. An effective conclusion reviews the ideas presented and, when appropriate, makes a call to action — a direction to readers on what to do once they are convinced of the position. When writing a persuasive piece, writers consider what they know about the audience in order to determine what kind of appeal — logical, emotional or ethical — will be most persuasive to readers. When brainstorming for a persuasive essay, it is imperative to consider counterarguments to the position and to address them, either by refuting or minimizing them.

## Vocabulary

**persuasive writing** — Writing that attempts to convince the audience to agree with the author's opinion on some controversial topic.

**argument** — A claim or assertion supported by evidence.

**controversial topics** — Topics about which there can be some disagreement.

**position** — A stance or viewpoint on an issue. In persuasive writing, you may be in favor of (pro) or against (con) a particular issue.

**purpose** — A goal that a piece of writing intends to accomplish.

**audience** — The people who will be reading a piece of writing.

**focus** — The central idea around which a piece of writing revolves. In persuasive writing the focus is the position the writer takes on the topic.

**thesis statement** — A sentence or two that states the topic and focus of the essay and the writer's position on the subject.

**call to action** — A direction to the audience on what to do once they have been convinced of the position.

**evidence** — The support a writer offers as proof to convince the audience that his or her reasoning is correct.

**appeal** — The approach used to convince readers of a position. Writers may use logical, ethical or emotional appeals.

**counterargument** — An opposing argument or viewpoint.

## Discussion Topics

- Students regularly encounter examples of persuasive writing. As a class, make a list of the examples. Identify and discuss the purpose and audience for each example. Which examples include a call to action?
- When writing persuasively, it is important to be aware of counterarguments to a position. For a given position on a topic (e.g., students should not have school work over the summer), brainstorm opposing arguments. As a class, reflect on how to address the counterarguments.

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- Emotional appeals, or appeals to readers' feelings, are valid parts of an argument; however, some appeals, such as name-calling, personal attacks, appeals to pity, or quotes from well-known figures about topics on which they are not experts, are unfair because they attempt to manipulate or distract readers. Ask students to think of a time when they heard a speech or debate. Discuss the kinds of appeals the speakers made, and whether the appeals were reasonable or unfair.

## Follow-Up Activities

- An effective argument is one that is tailored to its audience. As a class, brainstorm a list of questions writers might ask themselves about their audience before starting to write a persuasive piece. (e.g., What do my readers know about the topic? What information could influence their opinions? What kind of evidence will my audience find most convincing?)
- Editorials in newspapers are examples of persuasive writing. Bring in several articles and ask students to read and examine the central arguments and the authors' viewpoints. Encourage students to analyze the effectiveness of the appeals and the types of evidence used. Invite students to respond, in writing, to the editorials: Are they convinced of the points? Why or why not?
- Ask students to take positions on a controversial topic related to a curriculum unit. Students can brainstorm different arguments to support their positions and conduct research using multiple sources (e.g., books, videos, magazines, surveys, interviews, Internet). Students can present their positions, with accompanying visuals, in speeches or through debates. Afterward, invite students to discuss how effective the presentations were at persuading them to agree with the speakers.
- Assign students to research and write supporting arguments in favor of an issue that they may feel strongly against. Invite students to share strategies that they find helpful when designing arguments for positions with which they may not agree.
- In persuasive writing, who the audience is determines the kind of appeal a writer makes. Divide the class into small groups. Provide each group with the same controversial topic but a different target audience. Ask them to role play discussions using an appeal they think is best for their audience. Discuss how the different audiences change the types of arguments and appeals the students make.
- Advertisements and commercials are visual presentations of persuasive arguments. Bring in sample print ads from newspapers or magazines or a tape of television commercials. Have students study the ads to identify the appeal(s) used and to whom it is directed (the audience). Then have students describe how they would revise the ad to appeal to a different audience. Would they change the visual features of the ad? The writing? The sound?
- Credible evidence is essential to a persuasive essay. As a class, brainstorm criteria for reliable evidence from outside sources. Ask, "What are the characteristics of a reliable article? Book? Web site?" Review with students the correct format for citing and documenting sources.

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