



# Persuasive Techniques



It can be difficult to distinguish between writing to argue and writing to persuade. The ideas you offer can be almost the same - you basically want readers to agree with you. What makes the difference is how you go about convincing them.

When writing to persuade you can be **single-minded** and **opinionated**.

This difference means that when you **write to persuade**, you can afford to be:

- more **one-sided** - making your ideas seem like the only sensible choice.
- more **personal**
- more reliant on **passion** and **emotion**.
- more reliant on **rhetorical language and devices**.



I'm not pig-headed; I'm single-minded and determined!

There are many different persuasive techniques that you could use in your writing:

Colloquial / Chatty style	Rhetorical questions	Use contrasting ideas/images	Criticise opponent	Use personal pronouns	Shock tactics
Hyperbole	Emotive language	Play on the reader's guilt	Short Sentences	Humour	Quote an expert
Use statistics	Clusters of three	Forceful phrases	Imagery	Repetition	Play on sympathy
Figures of speech	Memorable words/phrases	Anecdote			

However, we are going to focus on just eight of the most effective techniques:

**P**ower of three .....

**E**motive language .....

**R**hetorical questions .....

**S**ay again .....

**U**ndermine opposing views .....

**A**necdote .....

**D**irect address .....

**E**xaggeration .....



# Persuasive Techniques



Born on 15 January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, King was an American clergyman, Nobel Peace Prize winner and one of the principal leaders of the American civil rights movements. On 28 August 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his magnificent, and very famous, "I have a dream speech" on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

Listen carefully to Martin Luther King's speech and answer the questions below.



**What is the speech about?** Are there any key words or phrases in the speech that provide clues as to the subject matter?

**How does the author/speaker feel about the subject?** What can we infer from the speaker's tone voice? Consider specific words (for example 'liberty' and 'negro') what are the connotations?

**This speech makes me feel...** Your initial 'gut' reaction.



# Persuasive Techniques



Consider the extracts from Martin Luther King's speech below. Identify the **PERSUADE** techniques used, highlight/underline the corresponding sections and annotate.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.



# Persuasive Techniques



I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

Why are these techniques effective? How do they make you feel?



# Persuasive Techniques



When you set out to persuade someone, you want them to accept your opinion on an issue: **you want to change that person's mind to your way of thinking.**

When writing to persuade, **you need to be very aware of your audience**; you want to be forging a link with them by establishing a common goal, not irritating them by completely ignoring their needs.

There are three areas we should attempt to appeal to when trying to get our audience on side:

Most people believe themselves to be reasonable, so appealing to a person's sense of reason is the most effective means of convincing them to change their way of thinking ('If we don't do this... then...').

We all share certain common ideas of what is just and fair! Appealing your audience's sense of what is right and fair can be a powerful persuasive device, e.g. 'Like you, I share a sense of horror and repulsion at what is happening...!'

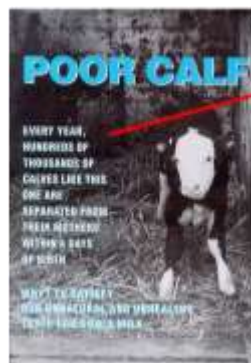
Persuasion often succeeds by the careful and considered use of emotion - especially showing how passionate you feel for your point of view.

## Appeal to Reason

Recognise that your audience feel they hold a reasonable view already, but try to dissuade that view by showing *how much more reasonable* your own position is. **Provide evidence** to support your ideas to suggest that they are reasonable and logical.

An effective way of appealing to your audience's sense of reason, while still presenting your view as the only correct view, is to use ..... rather than objective ones.

(However, do not overuse this as it can make you seem untrustworthy / insincere.)



**Every year, hundreds of thousands of calves like this one are separated from their mothers within days of birth.**

This is a **fact** – *it can be tested.*

**However, it is also still very emotive, why?**



# Persuasive Techniques



You work for The Vegetarian Society, you are trying to persuade people that turkey farming is cruel. See if you can improve the following facts by making them more emotive.

Approximately 10 million turkeys are killed in November/December. In the wild turkeys could live up to 10 year; farmed turkeys are usually killed between the ages of 12 and 26 weeks.

## Appeal to Character

Why wouldn't this speech have been as effective at an equal right's rally in France?

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

Persuasive Techniques



You need to try to convince your audience that you and they are very similar, sharing parallel ideas and views

One way to do this is to **create a sense of a shared personal or cultural experience**.

You can make your audience feel as though they have shared experiences with you by including

These illustrative 'real' stories add **a human and personal dimension** that can be **irresistible and fascinating**.

Be

Persuasion works best when you know your audience well so consider your reader, think about what their current views are and what has brought them to think that way - think about addressing them as a 'friend using the pronoun 'You'.

Be

people often put their own interests first. What can you offer your readers to help them change their mind?

Be

show that you share your reader's concerns - even if your view is different.

Be

no one will listen to an arrogant, impolite big-head.

Be

Use an **appropriate tone** to suit your audience and purpose.



# Persuasive Techniques



## Appeal to Emotions

The most important persuasive technique is to sound **authentic** and **passionate** (as if you really mean what you say!) and this requires a **confident tone**: sound like you are sincere and believable.

Some words have connotations that **evoke an emotional response**.

Because we often have an emotional association to words, our choice of vocabulary can be a powerful tool for persuasion. We can use words to make our audience feel guilty about a situation, angry and even hopeful.



Consider the difference between the words **building**, **house** and **home**.

The words all come from the same semantic field, with similar denotations; however, the connotations of words are very different.

## Hele's Herald

The first for all your local news.

25p

**Old man hit by robbers**

**A hundred peasants killed by troops**

**Train seats cut by teenagers**

**House prices fall throughout the country**

**Shortage of money creates problems in schools**

**Trouble on roads after snow fall**

**Player hits referee**

'Improve' at least 4 of these headlines by making them more emotive.



# Persuasive Techniques



You have to persuade the overworked customer services assistant at your local department store to refund/exchange your unwanted Christmas present.

- How will you start your conversation in order to get her 'on side'?
- What tone will you use?
- What persuasive techniques would it be most appropriate to employ?



Make your notes in the space provided below.



# Persuasive Techniques



The distinction between writing to persuade and writing to argue is incredibly subtle.

In both cases you need to present a supported written argument. What is the difference when writing to persuade?

In any form of argumentative writing you need to make sure that your points are clearly stated and well-developed.



I think that animals should have the same rights as human beings.

The point is clearly stated, but it lacks details. Without these details the writer will fail to convince their audience.

## Persuasive Techniques



How do you make an effective point?

- ➔ Introduce it.
- ➔ Explain it.
- ➔ Justify it.
- ➔ Drive it home.

## Persuasive Techniques



### Introduce Your Point.



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### Explain Your Point.



# Persuasive Techniques



What **EVIDENCE?**

## Justify Your Point.



- ➔ Give reasons.
- ➔ Remind people how they might behave in similar situations.
- ➔ Provide **evidence**.
- ➔ Make a moral argument.
- ➔ Show that alternatives are worse (undermine the opposition).

Persuasive Techniques



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## Drive Your Point Home.



### 1. Sound confident

- ➔ Certainly  
The fact is that  
There is no doubt that  
Clearly

Persuasive Techniques



## Drive Your Point Home.



- ### 2. Use poetic and descriptive techniques such as alliteration.



The good news is that  
greed is good.

Persuasive Techniques



## Drive Your Point Home.



Generalise - focus away from specific details onto general truths.

After all, surely we all want to be accepted.

Persuasive Techniques



## Drive Your Point Home.



- ### 4. End on a question to make the reader think.



Think for a moment.  
Wouldn't you be happier if everything in life was this simple?

Persuasive Techniques





# Persuasive Techniques



I'm sure you all agree that supermarkets need to start taking responsibility for the environment, and stop over packaging goods.

Recycling and the conservation of our planet's natural resources are key concerns to many responsible citizens, yet the supermarkets ignore this. They need to stop wrapping goods in multiple layers of unnecessary polythene, plastic and card board.

How many of you, like me, have done your bit for the environment diligently, but found yourself in the situation where you are forced to throw recyclable products into the non-recyclable bin, because you have simply run out of space in your recycling bin?

More than 77% of consumers questioned said that they were irritated by the amount of wasteful packaging *they* had to dispose of, while 52% of shoppers try to avoid buying over-packaged goods.

Why then do supermarkets insist on continuing this pointless practice?

Since when has an apple pie been such a perishable product that it requires four layers of packaging to protect it? Last night, fancying one such sweet pie, I made the mistake of popping to the shops and buying a box of pastries by a well-known brand. By the time I had helped my poor apple pie from its foil, plastic, polythene and card board prison, I had lost all appetite for the thing. Furthermore, two of the offending 'protective' elements weren't even recyclable.





# Persuasive Techniques



You are chairman of the school student council. It has been suggested, by the student body, that students should be allowed to **not** wear ties in the summer.

As chairman, it is your job to put this proposal forward to the school governors and persuade them that this is a justified and beneficial suggestion.