
The Persuasive Essay

This guide will help you to understand how a persuasive essay is written. Persuasive writing appeals to your ability to reason and to your emotions. This approach attempts to make the reader think, feel, and even act in a certain way. Persuasion is usually successful when the writer provides good reasons for doing, or not doing, something. Writing persuasively will convince the reader to see things **your** way.

In writing a persuasive essay, it is important to identify four elements of the situation you are writing about. These elements are defined here by the acronym, *PASS*.

Purpose – why you are writing

Audience – to whom you are writing

Subject – the topic of the essay

Status of the writer – who you are

Persuasive writing can take the form of an essay, a letter or a memorandum (memo). **The same content can be presented in any of these forms; only the headings change.** The heading of an essay tells you its title and author. Essay form is most often used by students. The business letter format is used to write a formal message. The memo is used when communicating within the same organization. The memo is less formal than the letter, and conveys less information in the heading. The memo assumes that people know one another.



Practice

Read each part of the following exercise and answer all **15** questions. The model essay takes form of a memo. The author, an employee of the firm, attempts to convince the Director of Personnel to implement a stress management program for company employees. He does this by offering reasons why such a program would be beneficial to all.

To: Maria Arias,
Director of Personnel

From: Jim Kennedy,
Sales Manager

Subject: Stress management program for employees

As an employee of this company, I would like to suggest that the Personnel Department offer a program in stress management. Many corporations offer this training to their workers as a means of improving productivity and reducing absenteeism. I believe such a program would benefit our company and its employees.

If our company were to implement a stress management program, I am certain one result would be greater productivity. One out of every five of the Fortune 500 companies now have some kind of stress management program. Many firms realize that too much stress makes workers inefficient. Pressure improves performance to a point, after which efficiency drops off sharply. Learning how to relax and manage stress can actually improve the productivity of employees.

Linked to the need to improve performance and productivity is the need to reduce absenteeism and medical costs. Stress is known to be a major contributor, either directly or indirectly, to heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, and suicide. By encouraging workers to reduce the strain on their bodies and minds, some companies have been able to make significant reductions in the incidence of stress-related diseases among their employees. Stress management has led to lower medical costs and fewer work hours lost due to absenteeism.

Stress management programs are very popular because they make good business sense. Our firm can have healthier, happier, more productive employees and higher profits. I hope that your department will consider my suggestion and implement a program to combat stress.

Use the model essay to answer the questions below.

The Introductory Paragraph

1. Write a sentence that states the author's purpose.

2. The writer's audience is:

3. Indicate the subject of the essay.

4. Refer to the status of the writer.

5. What **two reasons** does the author give in support of his suggestion?

6. Write the sentence that expresses the author's opinion.

Development Paragraph One

In a persuasive essay, **each** development paragraph explains **one reason** for the author's opinion.

7. Write the topic sentence that states the first reason in support of the author's opinion.

8. Write the **number** of sentences which help to explain this first reason.

9. Write the sentence which restates the topic and concludes this paragraph.

Development Paragraph Two

10. Write the topic sentence that states the second reason in support of the author's opinion.

11. Write the **number** of sentences which help to explain the second reason. _____

12. Write the sentence which restates the topic and concludes this paragraph.

The Concluding Paragraph

13. Write the sentence that restates the topic of the essay.

14. Write a sentence that supports this restatement.

15. Write the sentence that summarizes the author's opinion and concludes the essay.

Score the Practice exercise using the Answer Key, and go on to the Composition part of this guide.

Composition

This part of the guide will help you to write a persuasive essay. Respond to **one** of the four situations presented below with a persuasive composition. You may choose to write this as an essay or a memo. Follow the outline on the next page as you write.

Situations

- 1. Purpose:** To persuade your legislature to vote for or against a law which prohibits smoking in the dining area of restaurants.

Audience: Your legislator.

Subject: Smoking in the dining area of restaurants.

Status of writer: Identify yourself as the writer.
- 2. Purpose:** As a member of the local Board of Education, persuade your colleagues to your position regarding sex education in the schools.

Audience: Your local Board of Education.

Subject: Sex education in the schools.

Status of writer: Identify yourself as the writer.
- 3. Purpose:** To persuade a friend, relative, or colleague to lend you one thousand dollars.

Audience: A specific individual.

Subject: A \$1,000 loan.

Status of writer: Identify yourself as the writer.

4. Purpose: To persuade readers of a newspaper or magazine to your point of view regarding the death penalty (Letters to the Editor).
- Audience: Readers of a newspaper or magazine.
- Subject: The death penalty.
- Status of writer: Identify yourself as the writer.

Outline

- I. The Introductory Paragraph
 - A. In your opening sentence(s), introduce your purpose, audience, subject, and your status as writer. This information can be presented in any order.
 - B. State two reasons that support your persuasive argument, but do not explain them here.
 - C. Express your opinion and conclude the paragraph.

- II. Development Paragraph One
 - A. Write a topic sentence that states the first reason in support of your argument.
 - B. Write several sentences which explain this reason. Be specific and use details.
 - C. Restate the topic of this paragraph and write a conclusion.

- III. Development Paragraph Two
 - A. Write a topic sentence that states the second reason in support of your argument.
 - B. Write several sentences which explain this reason. Be specific and use details.
 - C. Restate the topic of this paragraph and write a conclusion.

- IV. The Concluding Paragraph
 - A. Restate the subject of the essay.
 - B. Support his restatement in a sentence or two.
 - C. Summarize your opinion and conclude the essay.

Use the Checklist to help you review and revise your writing. Do this for all drafts and your final copy.

Checklist	Yes	No
1. In my opening sentence(s) I introduce my purpose, audience, subject, and my status as writer (PASS).	___	___
2. In my first paragraph, I state two reasons that support my argument. I express my opinion and conclude the paragraph.	___	___
3. Each of my development paragraphs introduce and explain one reason in support of my argument.	___	___
4. In my concluding paragraph, I restate the subject of the essay, support it, express my opinion, and conclude the essay.	___	___
5. I used transitions to connect ideas and create unity in my writing.	___	___
6. I proofread and edited my composition.	___	___
7. I wrote a corrected copy of my work.	___	___

Submit the completed writing assignment and Practice exercise to your instructor for evaluation.

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