



**Academic Support Center
Writing Center**

The Persuasive Essay

Resource(s): *LB Brief Handbook, 5th edition, Chapter 12; OWL at Purdue website*

A **persuasive essay** is an essay in which the writer takes a side on an issue and tries to convince the reader to see the situation from the writer's point(s) of view, change the reader's preconceived notions on the issue, and/or take action that evokes change.

In order to write a persuasive essay, the writer must thoroughly research the topic, look at it from various perspectives, collect facts that should serve as solid evidence, and choose a side on the issue.

- The structure of a persuasive essay is held together by the following:
 - A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay
 - Body paragraphs that include evidential support
 - A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided
- The basic components of a persuasive essay are those of the five-paragraph essay. This is, however, by no means the only formula for writing such essays. If it sounds straightforward, that is because it is; in fact, the method consists of
 - 1) an introductory paragraph that includes the thesis statement—the main argument
 - 2) three evidentiary body paragraphs that may include discussion of opposing views and
 - 3) a conclusion.

Here are the steps as to how to write a persuasive essay:

Planning Stage:

For an argument essay to be effective, it must contain certain elements. For this reason, you must take a few minutes to plan before you jump into writing.

Find a Good Topic

To find a good topic for a persuasive essay you should consider several issues that will have two conflicting points of view or very different conclusions. While a strong interest in a topic is important, it's not enough. You next have to consider what position you can back up with reasoning. As you explore the topics, make a mental list of points you could use as evidence for or against an issue.

Consider Both Sides of Your Topic and Take a Position

Once you have selected a topic you feel strongly about, you should make a list of points for both sides of the argument and pick a side. One of your first objectives in your essay will be to present both sides of your issue with an assessment of each. Of course, you will conclude that your side is the best conclusion. In the planning stage, you will need to consider strong arguments for the "other" side. Then you'll shoot them down!

Gather Evidence

When we think of arguments, we might picture two red-faced people speaking quite loudly and making dramatic gestures, but that's because face-to-face arguments often become emotional. In fact, the act of arguing involves providing proof to support your claim, with or without emotions. In an argument essay, you will have to provide evidence without providing too much drama. You'll explore two sides of a topic (briefly) and provide proof as to why one side or position is the best one.

Tip(s):

- Avoid emotional language
- Know the difference between a logical conclusion and an emotional point of view
- Don't make up evidence
- Cite your sources
- Make an outline
- Be prepared to defend your side by knowing the strongest arguments for the other side. You might be challenged by the teacher or by another student.