



Argumentative and Persuasive Essay

This handout aims to distinguish argumentative from persuasive essays, as well as give some guidelines for writing them. In both types of essays, a strong coherence between introductions, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions drive the essay and deliver its point(s) to its readers clearly and directly. However, the difference between the two is in their appeal. Argumentative essays appeal to reason, while persuasive essay appeal to emotion. The following is a chart that explains both kinds of essays more specifically:

	PERSUASIVE WRITING	ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING
PURPOSE	The writer aims to get the reader to agree with his / her personal perspective.	The writer aims to get the reader to accept his / her perspective as truth.
GENERAL TECHNIQUE	Opinions are blended with facts, all in an attempt to convince the reader that the writer is “right.”	Relevant reasons and credible data are blended to demonstrate the writer’s argument as valid.
AUDIENCE	The writer has an intended audience to address his request or need. Who can give him what he wants?	To write an argument, the writer doesn’t need an intended audience. The writer is satisfied with simply “putting the truth out there.”
POINT OF VIEW	Since the writer is communicating directly to a person, group, or organization, it’s common to use first-person (i.e., I) and second-person (i.e., you) point of view.	With no specific audience in mind, this more formal writing addresses the multiple sides of an issue using the more objective third-person point of view.
ATTITUDE	Persuasive writers “go after” their readers more aggressively. They consider the emotional strategy that will work best on their audience (e.g., manipulation, motivation, inspiration, etc.). Persuasive writing is personal, passionate, and emotional.	Argumentative writers maintain a tone of fairness and reasonableness. Their attitude is respectful, tactful, and formal.
PERSPECTIVES PRESENTED	Persuasion has a single-minded goal— Get what the writer wants. It is based on the writer’s personal conviction that his way of thinking is the best. Consequently, the writer’s viewpoint is typically the only one presented. (See the lopsided scales above.)	Argumentative writing acknowledges opposing views within a pro/con piece. (See the more balanced scales above.) This demonstrates the writer as a fair-minded person and gives him the opportunity to counter these perspectives with more logic, reasoning, and proof.
STARTING POINT	1. Pick a topic of interest. (What do you want?) 2. Choose a side to “fight” for. 3. Start writing.	1. Conduct initial research on a debatable topic. 2. Align with the strongest side. 3. Continue gathering facts and research.
SUPPORT	Persuasive pieces rely on opinions and feelings. The writer uses his own passion and/or plays off reader emotions to get what he wants. The audience agrees with the writer because of strong emotional appeals.	Arguments rely on logical reasons that are all substantiated by facts, data, expert quotes, and evidence. The audience agrees with the writer because of the strong logical appeals.



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