

# Writing Persuasive Essays

They could do it because they believed they could.

Vergil

70 - 19 B.C. Roman

In persuasive writing, we try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking.

Elements toward building a good persuasive essay include

- establishing facts  
to support an argument
- clarifying relevant values  
for your audience (perspective)
- prioritizing, editing, and/or sequencing  
the facts and values in importance to build the argument
- forming and stating conclusions
- “persuading” your audience that your conclusions  
are based upon the agreed-upon facts and shared values
- having the confidence  
to communicate your “persuasion” in writing

Here are some strategies to complete a persuasive writing assignment:

Write out the questions in your own words.

- Think of the questions posed in the assignment  
while you are reading and researching. Determine
  - facts
  - the source of the facts for reliability and later reference
  - source of the facts for prejudice
  - values that color the facts or the issue
  - what you think of the author's argument
  - List out facts; consider their importance:  
prioritize, edit, sequence, discard, etc.  
Ask yourself “What's missing?”
  - What are the “hot buttons” of the issue?  
List possible emotions/emotional reactions and recognize them for later use.



Start writing a draft!

Start as close as possible to your reading/research. Do not concern yourself with grammar or spelling at this point. You will correct for grammar and spelling later.

- Write your first paragraph
  - Introduce the topic
  - Inform the reader of your point of view!
  - Entice the reader to continue with the rest of the paper!
  - Focus on three main points to develop
- Establish flow from paragraph to paragraph
- Keep your voice active
- Quote sources to establish authority
- Stay focused on your point of view throughout the essay
- Focus on logical arguments
- Don't lapse into summary  
in the development--wait for the conclusion
- Conclusion
  - Summarize, then conclude, your argument
  - Refer to the first paragraph/opening statement as well as the main points
    - Does the conclusion restate the main ideas?
    - Reflect the succession and importance of the arguments
    - Logically conclude their development
- Edit/rewrite the first paragraph  
to better telegraph your development and conclusion.
- Re-read your paper  
with a fresh mind and a sharp pencil

- Ask yourself:

Does this make sense? Am I convinced?

- Will this convince a reader?  
Will they understand my values, and agree with my facts?
- Edit, correct, and re-write as necessary
- Check spelling and grammar!
- Have a friend read it and respond to your argument.  
Were they convinced?
- Revise if necessary
- Turn in the paper



- Celebrate a job well done,  
with the confidence that you have done your best.

How to respond to criticism:

Consider criticism as a test of developing your powers of persuasion.

Try not to take it personally.

If your facts are criticized, double check them, and then cite your sources.

If your values are criticized, sometimes we need to agree, "to disagree." Remember: your success in persuading others assumes that the other person is open to being persuaded!

**The Study Guides and Strategies web site was created and is maintained by** Joe Landberger, academic web site developer at the [University of St. Thomas](http://www.ust.edu) (UST), St. Paul, Minnesota. It is collaboratively maintained across institutional and national boundaries, and last revised September 04, 2002.

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