**Writing the Persuasive Essay**

**What is the persuasive/argument essay?**

*In persuasive writing, a writer takes a position FOR or AGAINST an issue and writes to convince the reader to believe or do something.*

Persuasive writing, also known as the argument essay, utilizes logic and reason to show that one idea is more legitimate than another idea. It attempts to persuade a reader to adopt a certain point of view or to take a particular action. The argument must always use sound reasoning and solid evidence by stating facts, giving logical reasons, using examples, and quoting experts.

**When planning a persuasive essay, follow these steps:**

1. Choose your position. Which side of the issue or problem are you going to write about, and what solution will you offer? Know the purpose of your essay.

2. Analyze your audience. Decide if your audience agrees with you, is neutral, or disagrees with your position.

3. Research your topic. A persuasive essay must provide specific and convincing evidence. Often it is necessary to go beyond your own knowledge and experience. You might need to go to the library or interview people who are experts on your topic.

4. Structure your essay. Figure out what evidence you will include and in what order you will present the evidence. Remember to consider your purpose, your audience, and your topic.

**The following criteria are essential to produce an effective argument:**

• Be well informed about your topic. To add to your knowledge of a topic, read thoroughly about it, using legitimate sources. Take notes.

• Test your thesis. Your thesis, i.e., argument, must have two sides. It must be debatable. If you can write down a thesis statement directly opposing your own, you will ensure that your own argument is debatable.

• Disprove the opposing argument. Understand the opposite viewpoint of your position and then counter it by providing contrasting evidence or by finding mistakes and inconsistencies in the logic of the opposing argument.

• Support your position with evidence. Remember that your evidence must appeal to reason and must be logical.

**Parts of the Persuasive Essay**

**1. The Introduction**

Students must use a funnel introduction which progresses from the broad to the specific. Students should begin with general "hook" statements pertaining to the topic and continue by moving towards your position on the topic. Finally, the student must present a thesis statement, which narrows their discussion to a single provable assertion/position.

Introduction Breakdown:

General Statements (1-2 sentences)

Specific Statements (1-2 sentences)

Thesis Statement (1 sentence)

**Utilizing the funnel format, the student will effectively introduce and define the topic, create a focus, and indicate a clear direction for discussion.**

The introduction has a "hook or grabber" to catch the reader's attention. Some "hook" statements include:

1. Opening with an unusual detail/ misconception: (Manitoba, because of its cold climate, is not thought of as a great place to be a reptile. However, it has the largest seasonal congregation of garter snakes in the world!)

2. Opening with a strong statement: (Cigarettes are the number one cause of lighter sales in

Canada!)

3. Opening with a Quotation: (Elbert Hubbard once said, "Truth is stronger than fiction.")

4. Opening with an Anecdote: An anecdote can provide an amusing and attention-getting opening if it is short and to the point.

5. Opening with a Statistic or Fact: Sometimes a statistic or fact will add emphasis or interest to your topic. It may be wise to include the item's authoritative source.

6. Opening with a general observation on the theme in society. (In society, people tend to place great emphasis on first impressions.)

7. Opening with an analogy – a comparison of two things where the familiar is compared to the unfamiliar. (Finding a boyfriend is much like fishing. You need all of the proper equipment and the proper bait.)

**Thesis Statements:**

The introduction should also include a thesis or focus statement.

The Thesis/Hypothesis is your statement of purpose. The thesis/hypothesis should be **one** sentence in length. This is the foundation of your essay and it will serve to guide you in writing the entire paper.

**There are three objectives of a thesis statement:**

1. It tells the reader the specific topic of your essay.

2. It imposes manageable limits on that topic.

3. It suggests the organization of your paper.

**How to create a thesis statement:**

**1. Express an Opinion**

Make sure that you have a clear opinion about your topic. A thesis statement must include a claim that others might dispute. Your thesis summarizes the argument you’ll be making in your paper, so you want to make sure that your point of view is **clear and debatable**. Ask yourself whether your reader could challenge or oppose your thesis statement. If your thesis simply states facts that someone couldn’t disagree with, you may simply be summarizing an issue rather than presenting a clear point of view.

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| **Example of a non-debatable thesis statement:** | **Example of a debatable thesis statement:** |
| Pollution is bad for the environment. | Canada's anti-pollution efforts should focus on limiting the output levels of non-recyclable materials. Essay body paragraphs could discuss limiting privately owned cars, increasing home recycling, and restricting printing in offices.  |

**2. Be Specific**

A strong thesis statement is focused and specific. The reader should know exactly what you’re going to argue and why.

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| Example of a weak thesis that is not specific or focused enough: | Example of a strong thesis: |
| Online education is a great choice for students. | Online classes are a better choice than traditional classroom learning because they’re more flexible for students and teachers, they're less expensive and they let students work at their own pace.” |

**2. The Body**

After the introduction, the writer provides evidence to support the opinion offered in the thesis statement in the introduction. **The body should consist of at least three paragraphs.** Each paragraph is based on a solid reason to back your thesis statement.

**Hints for successful body paragraphs:**

1. Clarify your position in the first sentence of each body paragraph using a **topic sentence**

2. State your argument or reason that supports your position (thesis), think about what can be used as evidence and what needs to be explained, and then think about how you can elaborate.

3. Use transitions between sentences to serve as cues for the reader (first, second, then, however, consequently, therefore, thus, still, nevertheless, notwithstanding, furthermore, in fact, in contrast, similarly, instead).

**The following are different ways to support your argument (evidence):**

**Facts** - A powerful means of convincing, facts can come from your reading, observation, or personal experience.

Note: Do not confuse facts with truths. A "truth" is an idea believed by many people, but it cannot be proven.

**Statistics** - These can provide excellent support. Be sure your statistics come from responsible sources. Always cite your sources.

**Quotes** - Direct quotes from leading experts that support your position are invaluable.

**Examples** - Examples enhance your meaning and make your ideas concrete. They are the proof.

**3. The Conclusion**

A piece of persuasive writing ends by summarizing the most important details of the argument and stating once again what the reader is to believe or do.

1. Restate your thesis or focus statement but avoid repeating yourself. Use new language.

2. Summarize the main points: The conclusion enables your reader to recall the main points of your position. In order to do this you can paraphrase the main points of your argument.

3. Write a personal comment or call for action. You can do this:

* With a Prediction: This can be used with a narrative or a cause and effect discussion. The conclusion may suggest or predict what the results may or may not be in the situation discussed or in similar situations.
* With Recommendations: A recommendations closing is one that stresses the actions or remedies that should be taken.