



Writing a Persuasive Essay Guide

What Is a 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. Also known as the argument essay, it utilizes logic and reason to show that one idea is more legitimate than another. The argument must always use sound reasoning and solid evidence — stating facts, giving logical reasons, using examples, and quoting experts.

Planning Your Persuasive Essay

1. **Choose your position.** Decide which side of the issue you will argue and what solution you will offer. Know the purpose of your essay.
2. **Analyze your audience.** Determine whether your audience agrees with you, is neutral, or disagrees with your position.
3. **Research your topic.** A persuasive essay requires specific, convincing evidence. Go beyond personal experience, consult the library or interview subject-matter experts.
4. **Structure your essay.** Decide what evidence to include and in what order to present it, keeping your purpose, audience, and topic in mind.

Criteria for an Effective Argument

- **Be well informed.** Read thoroughly about your topic using legitimate sources and take notes.
- **Test your thesis.** Your argument must be debatable — if you can write a thesis directly opposing yours, your argument has two valid sides.
- **Disprove the opposing argument.** Understand the opposite viewpoint and counter it with contrasting evidence or by exposing inconsistencies in its logic.
- **Support your position with evidence.** All evidence must appeal to reason.

Parts of the Persuasive Essay

1. The Introduction

The introduction opens with a **hook** to capture the reader's attention, provides any necessary background, and closes with a clear **thesis statement**.

Types of Hooks

- **Unusual detail:** *Manitoba, because of its cold climate, is not thought of as a great place to be a reptile — yet it hosts the world's largest seasonal congregation of garter snakes.*
- **Strong statement:** *Cigarettes are the number-one cause of lighter sales in Canada.*
- **Quotation:** *Elbert Hubbard once said, "Truth is stronger than fiction."*
- **Anecdote:** *A short, amusing story relevant to your topic.*

- **Statistic or fact:** *A striking figure, with its authoritative source cited.*
- **Question:** *Have you ever considered how many books we'd read if it were not for television?*
- **Exaggeration / outrageous statement:** *The whole world watched as the comet flew overhead.*

The Thesis Statement

The thesis is a single sentence that (1) states your specific topic, (2) imposes manageable limits on that topic, and (3) suggests the organization of your paper. Through it, you signal to the reader: I've thought about this topic, I know what I believe, and I know how to organize it.

2. The Body

The body consists of at least three paragraphs, each built around a solid reason that supports your thesis. A strong persuasive essay anticipates opposing viewpoints and addresses them with counter-arguments.

Types of Supporting Evidence

- **Facts:** Drawn from reading, observation, or personal experience. Note: a 'truth' is widely believed but not proven; a fact can be verified.
- **Statistics:** Powerful support, always cite responsible sources.
- **Quotes:** Direct quotes from leading experts that reinforce your position.
- **Examples:** Make ideas concrete; they are the proof of your argument.

Tips for Strong Body Paragraphs

- Open each paragraph with a clear topic sentence that states the argument supporting your thesis.
- **Include concession statements.** Acknowledging part of the opposing argument is a sign of strength, not weakness. It finds common ground and establishes your credibility as a reasonable person. You cannot ignore compelling opposing evidence; doing so signals poor preparation. *Example: True, gun-control legislation in Canada needs tightening. The current proposal, however, does not go far enough. Instead...*
- Use transitions between sentences to guide the reader: *first, however, consequently, furthermore, in contrast, similarly, therefore...*

3. The Conclusion

The conclusion restates the thesis, summarizes the main points, and ends with a memorable closing move.

- **Restate your thesis:** Rephrase, don't simply repeat your main argument.
- **Summarize main points:** Paraphrase the key reasons that support your position.
- **Closing move:** Choose one of the following:
 - A **prediction** of likely results.
 - A **question** that invites readers to draw their own conclusions.

- **Recommendations** for specific actions or remedies.
 - A **quotation** that summarizes, predicts, questions, or calls for action.
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Persuasive Essay Outline

Introduction

- Hook to grab the reader's attention.
- Background information (if necessary).
- Thesis / focus statement.

Body Paragraph 1 – First Argument

- Topic sentence stating your point.
- Concession toward opposing argument (optional but recommended).
- Elaboration and evidence.
- Clincher sentence.

Body Paragraph 2 – Second Argument

- Topic sentence stating your point.
- Concession toward opposing argument (optional but recommended).
- Elaboration and evidence.
- Clincher sentence.

Body Paragraph 3 – Third Argument

- Topic sentence stating your point.
- Concession toward opposing argument (optional but recommended).
- Elaboration and evidence.
- Clincher sentence.

Opposing Viewpoint (Highly Recommended)

- State the opposing point.
- Your rebuttal to that point.
- Elaboration supporting your rebuttal.

Conclusion

- Summary of main points / reasons.
 - Restate thesis statement.
 - Personal comment or call to action.
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Transition Signals

Transitions connect ideas and show how they relate. Use them to guide your reader smoothly from one point to the next.

To repeat an idea: *In other words, That is, To repeat, Again*

To illustrate: *For example, For instance, In particular, Thus*

To signal contrast / change of direction: *Yet, However, Still, Nevertheless, On the other hand, In contrast, Instead of, On the contrary, Conversely, Notwithstanding, In spite of this*

To show time: *At once, At length, At last, Meanwhile, In the meantime, Presently, Shortly, Thereafter, In the end*

To restate more precisely: *To be exact, To be specific, More specifically, More precisely*

To add a new idea: *Similarly, Also, Too, Besides, Furthermore, Moreover, In addition*

To show cause and effect: *As a result, For this reason, Therefore, Hence, Consequently, Accordingly*

To conclude: *In short, In brief, On the whole, In summary, To sum up, To conclude*

Peer Conferencing Checklist

Ask a peer to read your draft and answer the following questions. Their responses will reveal whether your argument is clear and convincing.

- What is the thesis statement?
- How is the thesis explained?
- What are the three main points of the argument?
- How did the author support each point?
- What is the opposing point of view?
- What is the writer's proposed solution or call to action?