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STRATEGY GUIDE

Developing Persuasive Writing Strategies

Grades	6 – 12	
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Strategy Guide Series	Teaching Writing	

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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY GUIDE

This strategy guide describes the techniques used in effective persuasive writing and shares activities you can use to help students understand and use persuasion in their writing and critical thinking.

RESEARCH BASIS

Effective persuasion depends upon attention to the audience throughout the writing process. Simply following a traditional formula will not necessarily result in good persuasive writing. Students need to investigate how audience and purpose affect persuasive writing to arrive at persuasive strategies that work. Formulas are only part of the process. Fran Claggett explains, "We must not depend on artificial structures that ultimately reduce the act of composition to formulaic practices" (3). Persuasion requires a wider understanding of how to use a formula as a guide, modifying it strategically to fit the needs of the audience and purpose.

Claggett, Fran. *Teaching Writing: Craft, Art, Genre*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2005.

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Persuasion is the process of one person trying to convince someone to do something. A writer might try to persuade someone to take an action, to support a cause, or to change a habit. Regardless of the purpose, the general process for writing a persuasive text begins with thinking about determining the reader's feelings on the topic and then deciding what it will take to convince that reader to act. Here are some strategies you can use to help students become effective persuasive writers:

- Analyze persuasive texts from your class textbook or other media like political speeches and letters to the editor. Ask students to identify the audience and purpose for the text. The Purpose and Audience Analysis sheet includes some questions that you can use as part of your analysis.

- Choose authentic writing assignments that give students a real-world audience to communicate with and a real-world goal to work toward. The more concrete and real an assignment is, the better. Such authentic writing activities help students write more effectively because their intended readers are real people whom they can identify and their goals are real things that they hope to accomplish.

- Ask students to analyze the audience and purpose for their persuasive writing. Use the Basic Questions about Audience and/or the Purpose and Audience Analysis sheet to guide students' analyses. Challenge students to identify specific details about their readers and to think carefully about how characteristics of those readers relate to their purpose.

- Review the general structure for persuasive writing, using the Persuasion Map Planning Sheet.

- Students can use the Persuasion Map to organize and expand their ideas. Explain that the tool may not fit every persuasive text that they will write. For some audiences and purposes, they will have more reasons than will fit in the tool. Other times, they may have fewer reasons. Remind them that the tool helps them gather their notes and does not have to be a strict outline.

- Incorporate peer review activities. Have students explain whom their readers are and what goals they want to accomplish. Ask peer reviewers to think about how convincing the text will be for the intended readers and goal. If appropriate for the assignment, you can use the Letter to the Editor Peer Review Questions or the Endorsement Letter Peer Review Questions to guide students' review.

- Publish students' work. Deliver students' texts to their intended readers, when possible. If students have written letters to the editor of the school newspaper, for example, send them on to the newspaper. Seeing their writing actually persuade someone gives students a better understanding of the power of persuasion. Likewise, if they see that their writing fails to convince their readers, they can be motivated to work harder to identify the characteristics of their audience and to ensure that their text is more effective.

Encourage students to pay attention to the persuasion that they encounter in their daily lives—from commercials and ads to passages from the literature they read in and out of class. Bring this range and variety to the assignments you use as well. If students recognize the power of effective persuasive writing in and out of the classroom, they will better understand why learning to build persuasive arguments is valuable.

RELATED RESOURCES   **back to top**

LESSON PLANS

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Persuading Readers with Endorsement Letters

Students explore the genre of commercial endorsements, establishing characteristics and requirements for the genre. Each student then composes an endorsement of a product, service, company, or industry.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Unit
MyTube: Changing the World With Video Public Service Announcements

This assignment will go viral with students as they think about the meanings of words and images in public service announcements from YouTube before creating a PSA of their own.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Developing Persuasive Arguments through Ethical Inquiry: Two Prewriting Strategies

In this lesson, students use focused prewriting strategies to explore content and ethical issues related to a persuasive assignment.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan
Persuasive Techniques in Advertising

Students will be introduced to persuasive techniques used in advertising, analyze advertising, and explore the concepts of demographics, marketing for a specific audience, and dynamic advertising.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

Persuading an Audience: Writing Effective Letters to the Editor

Students use persuasive writing and an understanding of the characteristics of letters to the editor to compose effective letters to the editor on topics of interest to them.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Argument, Persuasion, or Propaganda? Analyzing World War II Posters

Students analyze World War II posters, as a group and then independently, to explore how argument, persuasion and propaganda differ.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Joining the Conversation about Young Adult Literature

Students create a persuasive case calling for the adoption of a particular young adult literature title into their school's language arts curriculum by writing letters or speeches.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Unit
Copyright Infringement or Not? The Debate over Downloading Music

This lesson takes advantage of students' interest in music and audio sharing. Students investigate multiple perspectives in the music downloading debate and develop a persuasive argument for a classroom debate.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Communicating on Local Issues: Exploring Audience in Persuasive Letter Writing

Students will research a local issue, and then write letters to two different audiences, asking readers to take a related action or adopt a specific position on the issue.

Grades **9 – 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson
Authentic Persuasive Writing to Promote Summer Reading

Turn summer reading lists from a teacher-centered requirement to a student-driven exploration by asking students to create brochures and flyers that suggest books to explore during the summer months.

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 – 12** | Student Interactive | Organizing & Summarizing
Persuasion Map

The Persuasion Map is an interactive graphic organizer that enables students to map out their arguments for a persuasive essay or debate.

PRINTOUTS

Grades **6 – 12** | Printout | Assessment Tool
Persuasion Rubric

Use this rubric to assess the effectiveness of a student's essay, speech, poster, or any type of assignment that incorporates persuasion.

Grades **3 – 12** | Printout | Graphic Organizer
Persuasion Map

Use this graphic organizer to develop a persuasive stance for an essay, speech, poster, or any type of assignment that incorporates persuasion.