

Writing Workshop

Persuasive Essay

In this unit, you have read works with persuasive elements and have seen how writers use persuasive elements to change the way others think about a subject. In this workshop, you will attempt to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience by writing a persuasive essay.



Complete the workshop activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

WRITE WITH A PURPOSE

WRITING PROMPT

Write a **persuasive essay** supporting a position on an issue that is important to you. Think of issues that make you react strongly. In your essay, try to convince a particular audience to adopt your opinion or take a specific action.

Idea Starters

- an important issue in your community, such as homelessness or disaster relief
- a national or international issue, such as pollution
- school policies, such as curriculum changes or the installation of surveillance cameras

THE ESSENTIALS

Here are some common purposes, audiences, and formats for persuasive writing.

PURPOSES	AUDIENCES	GENRES/FORMATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to persuade people to agree with your position• to motivate others to take a stand or take action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• classmates and teacher• parents• community members• city council members• Web readers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• essay for class• editorial• speech• blog• message board posting• letter to editor• podcast



TEXAS KEY TRAITS

1. FOCUS AND COHERENCE

- addresses an important **issue**
- introduces a clear **opinion** in a **thesis statement**

2. ORGANIZATION

- makes the position clear in the **introduction**
- follows a **logical sequence**
- concludes with a **call to action**

3. DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

- provides several **reasons** to support the position
- supports reasons with **evidence**
- uses **logical, emotional, and ethical appeals**
- uses rhetorical devices, such as **parallelism**
- addresses **counterarguments**

4. VOICE

- addresses the **audience** directly
- shows **commitment** to the issue

5. CONVENTIONS

- employs correct **grammar, mechanics, and spelling**

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Planning/Prewriting



WRITING 16A–G Write an argumentative essay that includes a clear thesis based on logical reasons with support; accurate representation of divergent views; an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context; relevant perspectives; consideration of sources; specific rhetorical devices; awareness of audience response.

Getting Started

CHOOSE AN ISSUE

In your essay, discuss an issue—a topic about which reasonable people can disagree. Make sure that your issue is meaningful, not trivial. List several potential issues, and then evaluate each one to see if it is something an audience will feel strongly about. Also think about possible sources.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Which issues do I care about the most?
- What reasons can I think of to support my position?
- What are some opinions that other people might have?
- What sources can I consult about this issue?

IDENTIFY YOUR THESIS

Write a one-sentence **thesis statement** that states your position or **opinion** on the issue. Your thesis statement should tell what you believe about the issue and how you propose to address it.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Topic: drug and alcohol abuse in kids

Perspective: mentoring can help prevent it

Thesis: We can combat the problem of addiction by building relationships that teach kids the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol.

THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

As you consider your issue more fully, keep in mind your **purpose**—to convince an audience that your opinion has merit. In order to persuade your **audience**, you will need to anticipate what they already know about the issue and how they feel about it.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Who is my audience? What do I want to convey to my audience?
- What do my audience members already know about the issue?
- Where do they stand on the issue? How can I change their minds?

SUPPORT YOUR POSITION

Include solid **reasons** why your readers should agree with your position. Reasons may **appeal** to logic, emotion, or ethics. A good persuasive essay contains a mixture of different appeals.

Logical appeals engage readers' ability to think clearly.

Emotional appeals stir readers' feelings and personalize the issue.

Ethical appeals engage readers' sense of right and wrong.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Addiction affects nine percent of the United States population.

Our country's children are suffering from a plague upon our land.

This epidemic must be addressed where it begins—with our young people.

Planning/Prewriting *continued*

Getting Started

GATHER SOLID EVIDENCE

To persuade your audience, you must provide valid reasons supported by **relevant** evidence, as in these types:

- **Anecdotes:** personal examples or stories that illustrate a point
- **Examples:** specific instances or illustrations of a general idea. (**Case studies** are examples from scientific studies.)
- **Expert opinion:** statement made by an authority on the subject
- **Facts:** informational statements that can be proven true. (**Statistics** are numerical facts that can be proven true.)

Valid reasons and relevant evidence come from the **primary and secondary sources** you consult to support your thesis statement. A primary source is material written by someone who was an eyewitness to an event. A secondary source is an account written by someone who was not directly involved in or an eyewitness to an event. Either type of source must be evaluated for its **validity** (does it present correct information?) and its **reliability** (is it a trustworthy, authoritative source?).

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Anecdote: My friend's older sister was struggling with addiction, but counseling and a mentor have been a great help.

Example: The American Academy of Pediatrics states that parents are the most important influence on teens' decisions.

Expert opinion: According to Nora D. Volkow, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, ...

Statistic: ... addiction affects nine percent of the United States population.

CONSIDER OPPOSING VIEWS

Consider objections that readers might raise. Addressing those objections in a **counterargument**—an argument that refutes those views—is a good way to strengthen your position.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Potential objection: Talking about addiction only encourages kids to try drugs.

Counterargument: Studies show that kids are less likely to become addicted to drugs when adults are open and honest.

PEER REVIEW Describe to a peer your audience and purpose. Then ask: What kinds of evidence will persuade readers to agree with me?



In your *Reader/Writer Notebook*, develop your writing plan and a working thesis. Then, make lists of your reasons, evidence, and appeals. Consider the following tips as you gather evidence.

- Use reference books and articles as sources for evidence that supports your position.
- Use up-to-date and reliable Web sites to locate information on the issue, such as those ending in *.gov* or *.edu*.
- Write down any personal experiences that relate to your issue.

Drafting



WRITING 13A–B Plan a first draft; structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way and develop drafts in open-ended situations that include rhetorical devices used to convey meaning.

The following chart shows a structure for organizing an effective persuasive essay.

Organizing a Persuasive Essay

INTRODUCTION

- Begin with an attention-grabbing statistic, fact, or anecdote.
- Provide any necessary background information.
- Include a **thesis statement** that identifies the issue and your position on it.

BODY

- Support your positions with solid **reasons** and convincing **evidence** from valid and reliable sources.
- Use **rhetorical devices**, such as rhetorical questions (questions whose answers are obvious), analogies (comparisons of two situations in order to make a point), and parallelism (repeated words, phrases, or sentences that use the same grammatical structure in order to emphasize a particular idea).
- Use **appeals** to logic, emotion, and ethics to engage readers.
- Organize information in a **logical sequence**, such as order of importance.

CONCLUSION

- Restate your opinion and summarize your reasons.
- Call readers to action.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Parallel words or word groups are often joined by **correlative conjunctions** (*both ... and; either ... or; neither ... nor; not only ... but also; whether ... or*). Correlative conjunctions help writers show relationships between ideas. When using correlative conjunctions, make sure the verb agrees in number with the subject.

Correlative Conjunctions

neither ... nor

both ... and

not only ... but also

Examples

Neither peer pressure *nor* popular culture has the good influence on kids that a positive adult role model has.

Both parents *and* teachers are able to engage young adults on the issue of addiction.

Young people look to adults *not only* for guidance *but also* for example.



Develop a first draft of your persuasive essay, following the structure outlined in the chart above. As you write, be sure to include a counterargument and at least one example of parallelism.

Revising

As you revise, evaluate the content, organization, and style of your essay. Your goal is to determine if you have achieved your purpose and effectively communicated your ideas to your intended audience. The questions, tips, and strategies in the following chart will help you revise and improve your draft.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY		
Ask Yourself	Tips	Revision Strategies
1. Does the introduction grab readers' attention? Does it include necessary background information?	▶ Put brackets around any sentence or sentences that draw readers' interest. Put a check mark by any background information.	▶ Add an anecdote, quotation, or provocative statement to gain the audience's interest. Add background facts the reader may need.
2. Does the introduction include a clear thesis statement, or opinion statement?	▶ Circle the thesis statement, or opinion statement.	▶ Add a statement that expresses a clear position on the issue.
3. Does the essay include reasons and evidence to support the opinion?	▶ Underline the reasons in the essay. Double underline sentences used as evidence for each reason.	▶ Add reasons or elaborate on reasons already given. Add evidence that supports them.
4. Does the essay include a mixture of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals?	▶ Put the letters L by logical appeals, EM by emotional appeals, and ETH by ethical appeals. If you use only one kind of appeal, revise.	▶ Add words and examples that engage your audience members' minds, hearts, and sense of right and wrong.
5. Do rhetorical devices help support the opinion?	▶ Put a star next to any rhetorical questions, arguments by analogy, or use of parallelism.	▶ Add rhetorical devices, such as rhetorical questions, argument by analogy, or parallelism.
6. Does the conclusion restate the writer's opinion? Does it include a call to action?	▶ Circle the restatement of the position. Highlight the call to action.	▶ Add a statement that restates your opinion. Add a call to action.



PEER REVIEW Exchange your persuasive essay with a classmate. As you read and comment on your classmate's essay, make sure that you focus on its logic and organization—not whether you agree with his or her opinion. Be sure to discuss whether your classmate has convinced you of his or her position. If not, give concrete suggestions for improvement, using the revision strategies in the chart.



WRITING 13C Revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes by rearranging the words, sentences, and paragraphs to employ tropes and schemes.

ANALYZE A STUDENT DRAFT

Read this student draft, and notice the comments on its strengths as well as the suggestions for improvement.

The Plague Upon the Land

by Stephen Laine, McCallum High School

1 According to Nora D. Volkow, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, addiction affects nine percent of the United States population. This epidemic must be addressed where it begins—with our young people. The effects are too widespread and too many people are susceptible to the black hole of drug and alcohol addiction for us to ignore the problem. We can combat America's addiction problem by building relationships that teach kids the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol.

Stephen introduces his essay with a **statistic**, but a more relevant statistic would improve his logical appeal. Stephen states his **position** at the end of the first paragraph.

2 One way to create and nurture these relationships is through a mentoring program. Children who lack relationships with positive adult role models are more at risk to become drug and alcohol users. When kids connect with a responsible and caring mentor who engages them in productive and fun activities, they experience an alternative to drug use. A mentor can warn them about the power of peer pressure. Many kids who have avoided drinking and drugs will eventually try them. "It's just one sip; it can't hurt." Whether they know it or not that one sip can lead to one more, and then one more. A mentor can steer kids away from drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure.

Stephen offers one **reason** that supports his opinion.

LEARN HOW **Add Statistics** You won't interest an audience in your issue if your introduction lacks appeal. To grab your readers' attention, add a relevant fact, statistic, quotation, or anecdote, or ask a rhetorical question. Stephen found additional statistics that emphasize the problem and draw readers into his essay.

STEPHEN'S REVISION TO PARAGRAPH 1

In addition, the national PTA claims that every day about 4,700 American youth under the age of eighteen try marijuana for the first time. This equals the enrollment in six average-sized high schools.

This epidemic must be addressed where it begins—with our young people.

The effects are too widespread and too many people are susceptible . . .

ANALYZE A STUDENT DRAFT *continued*

3 Another way to combat drug use is to make a concerted effort in each household to teach kids that drugs and alcohol can ruin your life. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that parents or guardians are the most important influence in a teen's decisions about drug use. Children can be taught at an early age that drug use will lead to a life of destruction. Caring adults can teach children the facts: alcohol abuse will lead to liver failure and ultimately death, and drugs can decimate your body and mind. The government can create standardized teaching tools to address the dangers of addiction, but the most important tool is the parents' or guardians' interest, communication, and role as a model for their children. Communication in homes may be the best weapon we have to fight drug abuse in kids.

Stephen cites an **example** to support the idea that mentoring works.

4 We can take action against this epidemic of drug abuse and addiction. We can urge the community to teach schools, churches, clubs, and families how to approach the subject of drug and alcohol abuse. We can create meaningful relationships with children through effective mentoring programs.

Stephen uses **parallelism** at the end to emphasize his points. His **call to action**, however, lacks **emotional appeal**.

LEARN HOW **Add Emotional Appeal to a Conclusion** A good conclusion to a persuasive essay should stir readers' emotions and prompt them to act on the issue. Stephen's conclusion lacks a strong emotional appeal. He could add emotional appeal by inserting stirring language into his conclusion.

STEPHEN'S REVISION TO PARAGRAPH 4

We ^{must} ~~can~~ take action against this epidemic of drug abuse and addiction. We ^{must} ~~can~~ urge the community to teach schools, churches, clubs, and families how to approach the subject of drug and alcohol abuse. We ^{must} ~~can~~ create meaningful relationships with children through effective mentoring programs. *Our country's children are suffering from this plague upon our land. We all must work together to educate our children because they are our future!*



Use the feedback from your peers and teacher as well as the two “Learn How” lessons to revise your essay. Evaluate how thoroughly you have presented and supported your thesis, or opinion statement. Also, consider how well you grabbed the attention of the audience members in your introduction and appealed to their emotions in your conclusion.

Editing and Publishing



WRITING 13D–E Edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences **ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 18–19** Use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions; spell correctly.

In the editing stage, you review your essay to make sure it is free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. You don't want mistakes to distract your audience from focusing on your argument.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: COMMAS AFTER INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

Introductory phrases and clauses create transitions that help writers lead their readers through their arguments and supporting ideas. They also enliven writing by adding variety to sentence structures. When you use introductory phrases and clauses, be sure to separate them from the main clause of the sentence with a comma.

When kids connect with a responsible and caring mentor who engages them in productive and fun activities, they experience an alternative to drug use.

[A comma follows the **introductory clause**.]

As Stephen edited his essay, he noticed an incorrectly punctuated introductory phrase. A comma is necessary to set off the introductory phrase from the main clause.

Whether they know it or not, that one sip can lead to one more, and then one more.

PUBLISH YOUR WRITING

To persuade people, first you have to reach them. Here are some ways you can share your essay with an audience.

- Submit your essay to the school or local newspaper.
- Present your essay as a speech during a meeting of your school's student council, your school district's board of education, or your local city council.
- Post your essay on a Web site that focuses on your issue.



Correct any errors in your persuasive essay. Add an emotional appeal to your conclusion. Edit carefully and check that you have placed commas after any introductory clauses or phrases. Then, publish your final essay where your audience is likely to see it.



Scoring Rubric

Use the rubric below to evaluate your persuasive essay from the Writing Workshop or your response to the on-demand prompt on the next page.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY	
SCORE	TEXAS KEY TRAITS
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Focuses consistently on a clear issue and offers a reasonable and thoughtful position• Organization Shows effective and logical organization throughout• Development of Ideas Supports a position thoroughly, using clearly stated reasons and convincing evidence• Voice Demonstrates clear commitment to the issue and position statement• Conventions Shows a strong command of grammar, mechanics, and spelling
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Focuses on a reasonable position, with minor distractions• Organization Shows effective organization throughout, with minor lapses• Development of Ideas Offers mostly thoughtful ideas and reasons, but some evidence may be weak or unreliable• Voice Demonstrates some vagueness on the issue and position statement• Conventions Shows general control of grammar, mechanics, and spelling
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Includes some loosely related ideas that distract from the writer's position• Organization Shows some organization, with noticeable gaps in the flow of ideas• Development of Ideas Offers routine, predictable ideas and reasons with uneven reasoning and supporting evidence• Voice Demonstrates little interest in the issue, and position statement is predictable• Conventions Shows a limited control of grammar, mechanics, and spelling
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Shows little awareness of the topic and purpose for writing• Organization Lacks organization• Development of Ideas Offers unclear and confusing ideas and demonstrates minimal persuasive reasoning• Voice Exhibits little or no interest in the issue or position• Conventions Exhibits major problems with grammar, mechanics, and spelling



Preparing for Timed Writing



WRITING 13B Develop drafts in timed situations.

1. ANALYZE THE PROMPT

5 MIN



Read the prompt carefully. Then, read it again, underlining the words that tell the audience, the topic, and the purpose.

PROMPT

Imagine that your school board is thinking of implementing a graduation requirement mandating that students do part-time volunteer work. Write a persuasive essay convincing students to support or oppose the requirement.

Purpose ↗

← Audience

Topic ↘

2. PLAN YOUR RESPONSE

10 MIN



Think about the **reasons** for each side of the argument. Make a list of pros and cons for the volunteering requirement. Which side of the argument do you support? Which side can you defend with **reasons**? List at least two pieces of **evidence** (facts, statistics, anecdotes, examples) for each reason. Then decide on the position you will argue.

Reasons	Evidence

3. RESPOND TO THE PROMPT

20 MIN



Begin drafting your essay. You may want to start by simply stating your opinion or thesis. As you write, keep the following points in mind:

- In the introduction, grab your readers' attention and state your position.
- In each body paragraph, give one reason for your position with valid and specific evidence. You can use examples from your experience or someone else's.
- Conclude your essay with a statement of strong conviction and a call to action.

4. IMPROVE YOUR RESPONSE

5–10 MIN



Revising Compare your draft with the prompt. Does your draft clearly state a position? Does it provide sufficient evidence? Does it end with a persuasive conclusion?

Proofreading Find and correct any errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics. Make sure that your paper and any edits are neatly written and legible.

Checking Your Final Copy Before you submit your paper, examine it once more to make sure that you are presenting your best work.

Listening & Speaking Workshop

Giving a Persuasive Speech

Reach your audience in a new and effective way by presenting your persuasive essay as a speech. In presenting your ideas to listeners rather than readers, you can use your voice as well as your body language to make your point.



Complete the workshop activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

SPEAK WITH A PURPOSE

PROMPT

Adapt your persuasive essay into a **formal speech**. Practice your speech, and then present it to your class.

TEXAS KEY TRAITS

A STRONG PERSUASIVE SPEECH . . .

- focuses on a clear opinion about a relevant issue
- offers specific, valid reasons and compelling evidence
- moves at a reasonable pace and keeps the audience's interest
- reflects the speaker's commitment to the issue



LISTENING AND SPEAKING 25

Speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Formulate sound arguments using elements of classical speeches, the art of persuasion, rhetorical devices, eye contact, speaking rate, volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language.

Adapt Your Essay

Your audience will listen to your argument instead of reading it, so you need to adapt your essay so that your ideas are better suited to an oral presentation.

- **Type of Speech** Decide which type of persuasive speech you want to give. The type of speech you choose will help you focus your purpose and call to action.

Proposition of Fact	A speech that argues a thesis as fact
Proposition of Policy	A speech that attempts to get an audience to support a particular plan of action by offering steps to follow
Proposition of Problem	A speech that tries to persuade an audience that a specific problem exists and requires solving
Proposition of Value	A speech that argues the relative merit of a person, place, or thing

- **Audience** Know your audience members and use the appeal that suits them best. For example, city council members might respond best to an appeal to logic.
- **Introduction** Grab listeners' attention by opening with a thought-provoking quotation, rhetorical question, or anecdote. Then state your opinion clearly.
- **Reasons and Evidence** Evaluate your written essay for the strongest reasons and evidence. Present only reasons and evidence that will be most compelling.
- **Counterargument** Acknowledge and counter opposing views with strong evidence.
- **Conclusion** Summarize your main points and restate your opinion. Then call the audience to action.

Listening & Speaking Online

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Deliver Your Speech

USE VERBAL TECHNIQUES

How you use your voice can give the audience as much information as what you say. Before you deliver your persuasive speech, practice your delivery techniques. Look at the list below for tips.

- **Volume** Speak forcefully but not too loudly—you don't want listeners to think that you are yelling at them.
- **Enunciation** Pronounce words, especially unfamiliar terms, clearly and precisely.
- **Pace** Speak at a reasonable rate and use a natural rhythm. Slow down when you are discussing ideas that are important or complicated. When using emotional appeals, you may want to speed up when you want to excite listeners or slow down when you want them to consider something sad or moving.
- **Tone** Use the same inflections and gestures you use when you share your opinion respectfully with adults, teachers, and other students. Maintain a formal tone.

USE NONVERBAL TECHNIQUES

Facial expressions and gestures add meaning to your formal speech.

- Use gestures or body language to emphasize points in your argument and to underscore a particular rhythm or feeling.
- Make frequent eye contact with your audience.
- Employ facial expressions, such as smiling, frowning, or raising an eyebrow to add emphasis to your points. A frown, for example, conveys disapproval.
- Pay attention to how your posture conveys your attitude toward ideas. For example, standing tall indicates confidence in one's ideas.
- Consider using props, charts, or other visual aids to clarify your points and make your argument more convincing.



As a Speaker Before you present, create note cards that contain short words or phrases that remind you of important facts, statistics, quotations, or anecdotes that you want to include. By jotting down words and phrases, you will avoid sounding as if you are reading rather than speaking. Arrange the cards in the order in which you will present your ideas. As you give your presentation, use your notes to stay on track.

As a Listener Evaluate a classmate's delivery of his or her persuasive speech. Listen carefully to make sure that you can follow the argument. Identify any points that seem unclear and note whether the delivery is effective.

