

Aristotle's Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

TLC/College of the Canyons

When you write an argument, you can connect with your audience logically, emotionally, and ethically. By using a combination of these strategies known as “appeals”—logos, pathos, and ethos— you can effectively persuade your reader. Of the three, logos is most essential to a strong, valid argument.

LOGOS (“logic”): Persuade your readers by using logical reasoning.

Logos is the strategic use of claims supported by effective evidence and reasoning. Especially important are the clarity of your claim, the logic of your supporting points, and the relevance of your supporting evidence. Logos is your key to creating a strong argument.

Do the following:

- Create clear claims
- Qualify your claims, when necessary: (for example, use “some” and “often” rather than “all” and “always”)
- Create valid reasoning (commentary or warrant) about the evidence that you present
- Provide strong evidence (facts, statistics, personal experience, expert testimony, interviews, observations, anecdotes, etc.)
- Acknowledge the opposition and respond to opposing views

Avoid the following:

- Claims that are too general or vague
- Reasons that do not relate logically to the claim
- Misusing evidence—for example, presenting evidence that does not accurately represent an author’s views
- Weak or absent commentary or warrant
- Ignoring important evidence
- Ignoring opposing viewpoints
- Logical fallacies

PATHOS (“emotion”): Persuade your readers by connecting with their feelings and imagination.

Pathos can be a powerful appeal to add to your argument. For example, if you have used statistical evidence (logos) to support a claim (which may be persuasive, but somewhat dry), you can add descriptions, case studies, and visual images to show your readers the human and emotional impact of the issue you are discussing. Excessive use of pathos, however, can mislead readers or attempt to hide an argument that lacks logos—as in some commercial and political advertisements.

Do the following:

- Use pathos to reinforce logos, not substitute for it
- Use images, descriptions, and case studies to create an emotional connection to your reader
- Present the above in a fair manner—not to conceal or deceive your reader
- Appeal to your reader’s appreciation of idealism, beauty, compassion for others, nostalgia, and humor

Avoid the following:

- Pathos that substitutes for relevant evidence and clear, logical reasoning
- Manipulation of the reader’s emotions through appeals to their patriotism, fear, hate, prejudice, pity, etc.
- Oversimplified, unthinking reactions to complex problems
- Use of stereotypes or prejudices that pit one group against another

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ETHOS ("credibility"): Persuade your readers through your credibility as a writer.

Ethos is essential to a persuasive argument. Through the ethical appeal, you demonstrate that you are fair, thoughtful, open-minded, honest, and knowledgeable. Your reader will sense that you are trustworthy and credible.

Do the following:

- Show that you are well-informed about the topic—that you have researched broadly and used the best sources from experts
- Show that you are confident about your position but understand the reader's concerns
- Show that you are willing to listen to other views and present them to your reader
- Demonstrate that you are sincere and honest
- Show that you are responsible by representing others' views accurately and fairly

Avoid the following:

- Dishonesty
- A close-minded approach
- Lack of fairness
- Distorting or misrepresenting information
- Use of insults (*ad hominem* fallacy) to degrade those who hold opposing views
- Ignoring opposing views
- Insufficient research on the topic/issue
- Lack of citations in your essay
- Use of sources that are biased or outdated
- Use of sources that do not cite studies or provide a list of references

Adapted from the University Writing Center (UCW) at the University of Central Florida
<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~uwc/Writing%20Resources/Handouts/appeals.htm>

Aristotle's Appeals

The goal of argumentative writing and speaking (Rhetoric) is to persuade your audience that your ideas are valid or more valid than someone else's. Greek philosopher Aristotle divided the means of persuasion, or appeals, into three categories--**Ethos, Pathos, Logos**.

Ethos, or ethical appeal, involves convincing through the credibility of the author. According to Aristotle, our perception of a speaker or writer's character influences how believable we find what that person has to say. This projected character is called the speaker or writer's ethos. We are more likely to be persuaded by a person who is considerate of others and has a good mind and solid learning. It is important to project the impression to the reader that you are someone worth listening to; in other words, make yourself an authority on the subject. This is often an issue of simply maintaining a reasonable tone.

Another aspect of Ethos is referencing other authorities whose views closely align or bolster your own argument. This is used in academic papers when quoting specialist in a certain field (scientists, researchers, literary scholars, etc.) Politicians use it when referring to other politicians or the founders (which also helps them find common ground with their audience)

For example: "As major league manager, Tony LaRussa, has proven time and again, the sacrifice bunt can be used effectively to generate runs." OR: "For ten years I have studied the populations of North American honeybees with funding from The National Institute of Science, and I can, without a doubt, tell you that honey bee colonies have declined over the past quarter century."

Some institutions have a stronger "extrinsic" ethos than others. For example, if you used *The National Enquirer* as a source in a paper I would be less swayed than by, say, *The Washington Post*.

Ethos is largely the reason you have been told not to use the "I" or first person in your essays. This is because you teachers have assumed you are not an expert. I am in the middle ground on this. I believe an essay written by you that holds your views can use the "I"; however, it must be bolstered by other evidence to support *your* argument or viewpoint.

Pathos (Emotional) is an appeal to an audience's sense of identity, their self-interest, their emotions. Many rhetoricians consider pathos the strongest (and most dangerous) of the appeals.

An emotional appeal to our sense of identity and self-interest exploits common biases (think "clicks" in school); we naturally bend in the direction of what is advantageous to us, what serves our interests. Writers who belong to groups we identify with often seem more compelling. Think about how some people swear by MSNBC and others FOX.

Emotions can strongly assist persuasion. If, for example, a writer wants us to evaluate something negatively, she or he may try to arouse the reader's anger through word choice. Think about the different connotations between the words shack and cottage, the words need and desire, the words meager and insufficient. Direct appeals to the reader to feel an emotion (e.g. "You should be crying now") are rarely as effective.

To persuade us to make a charitable donation, a rhetorician may work appeal to our sense of empathy (or guilt). Ask someone for money to buy a burger after they've just eaten a steak. Think about the fact that beggars who have animals, usually dogs, often receive more donations than those without dogs. This is because the dog plays to our emotions.

The danger of pathos is that we naturally find the writer who flatters us more persuasive than the one of challenges us. One of the primary goals of a liberal arts education is the free-flow of ideas, of trying to challenge our beliefs and held assumptions. In this way, pathos should be used for this class through understanding your audience and through careful word choice.

Logos (logical appeal) means persuading through the use of reason. The use of reason (and evidence) is the heart of argumentation and cannot be emphasized enough. It requires clarity of message, reliable evidence or support, and sound reasoning to show how that evidence backs up an author's claim.

You can use two different types of logic to accomplish this: inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. In fact, you should use both inductive and deductive logic to develop and support a claim or thesis.

Inductive reasoning is often referred to as the scientific method. With inductive reasoning, the writer cites a long list of similar examples and then draws from them a general proposition (specific to general). This is not always accurate. Think about the sun rising in the east and falling in the west. What might we conclude from the using inductive reasoning? It is also why we so often have contrasting scientific studies.

One uses *deductive reasoning* by moving from a general proposition to a specific truth. For example: "If Bob is shorter than Judy and Judy is the shortest girl in Mrs. Smith's fourth-grade class, it stands to reason, Bob is the shortest student in Mrs. Smith's fourth-grade class." One danger of deductive reasoning is to make sure the general proposition is true. We might need some proof that Bob is shorter than Judy and that Judy is the shortest girl in the class to determine the truth of the above statement.

Thus, beware of logical fallacies. A *post-hoc fallacy* deals with faulty cause and effect. For example, we might not want to make too much of the fact that "every time a space shuttle launches, a cold front blows through new England." Even if we had ten years' evidence that proved the correlation, it is still suspect, right? There are also *ad hominen fallacies*, which are an attack on a person and not the issue (for example, attacking a legislator who was born wealthy as being a free spender of government money possesses some logic but it is skewed). Avoid errors in logic or at least be honest about the limits of the logic and evidence available to you.

Aristotle in the 21st Century

The Three Appeals

When Aristotle wrote his *Rhetoric* in the 4th century BCE, he began a process of codifying the possible ways that speakers or writers could persuade their audiences by the use of evidence. His schema has proven so useful that it has been the foundation for philosophers and writers for more than a millennium, and will likely endure as long as civilization does. Aristotle's outline of the use of evidence for persuasive writing was just as useful for the ancients as it will be in the next century.

Learning Goals:

1. To understand Aristotle's concepts of the three appeals:
 - *logos*,
 - *pathos*, and
 - *ethos*.
2. To learn the use of Aristotle's three appeals for the writer.
3. To recognize the three appeals in context.

Evidence provides support for claims. Evidence is subcategorized according to *how* it is used to support the claim. Evidence that focuses on our ability to think is classified as *rational appeal*, evidence that focuses on our ability to 'feel' is *emotional appeal*, and evidence that focuses on our ability to trust those we find to be credible is *ethical appeal*.

The Types of Evidence		
Rational Appeals <ul style="list-style-type: none">• facts• case studies• statistics• experiments• logical reasoning• analogies• anecdotes	Emotional Appeals <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the higher emotions<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. altruism2. love3. ...• the base emotions<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. greed2. lust3. ...	Ethical Appeals <ul style="list-style-type: none">• trustworthiness• credibility<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. expert testimony2. reliable sources3. fairness

For example, consider these quotes from President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union speech. Here Clinton combines all of the available means of persuasion for his given thesis:

- Ethical appeal (*ethos*)

"Before I go on, I would like to take just a moment to thank my own family, and to thank the person who has taught me more than anyone else over 25 years about the importance

of families and children — a wonderful wife, a magnificent mother and a great First Lady. Thank you, Hillary" — showing himself to be a sensitive family man;

- Emotional appeal (*pathos*)

"I have heard Mrs. Gore say that it's hard to be a parent today, but it's even harder to be a child" — reminding listeners of the challenges children face; and

- Rational appeal (*logos*)

"To the media, I say you should create movies and CDs and television shows you'd want your own children and grandchildren to enjoy. I call on Congress to pass the requirement for a V-chip in TV sets so that parents can screen out programs they believe are inappropriate for their children. When parents control what their young children see, that is not censorship; that is enabling parents to assume more personal responsibility for their children's upbringing. And I urge them to do it."

Those three examples above appeared early in the address. To get a better sense of how Clinton used those appeals, look at the whole passage from which I drew those examples:

"Our first challenge is to cherish our children and strengthen America's families. Family is the foundation of American life. If we have stronger families, we will have a stronger America. Before I go on, I would like to take just a moment to thank my own family, and to thank the person who has taught me more than anyone else over 25 years about the importance of families and children — a wonderful wife, a magnificent mother and a great First Lady. Thank you, Hillary.

All strong families begin with taking more responsibility for our children. I have heard Mrs. Gore say that it's hard to be a parent today, but it's even harder to be a child. So all of us, not just as parents, but all of us in our other roles — our media, our schools, our teachers, our communities, our churches and synagogues, our businesses, our governments — all of us have a responsibility to help our children to make it and to make the most of their lives and their God-given capacities.

To the media, I say you should create movies and CDs and television shows you'd want your own children and grandchildren to enjoy. I call on Congress to pass the requirement for a V-chip in TV sets so that parents can screen out programs they believe are inappropriate for their children. When parents control what their young children see, that is not censorship; that is enabling parents to assume more personal responsibility for their children's upbringing. And I urge them to do it. The V-chip requirement is part of the important telecommunications bill now pending in this Congress. It has bipartisan support, and I urge you to pass it now.

To make the V-chip work, I challenge the broadcast industry to do what movies have done — to identify your programming in ways that help parents to protect their children. And I invite the leaders of major media corporations in the entertainment industry to come to the White House

next month to work with us in a positive way on concrete ways to improve what our children see on television. I am ready to work with you."

You can read the full text of the address by visiting the White House web site:

The 1996 State of the Union Address

... State of the Union, 1996 ...
... [http://www.whitehouse.gov](#) ...