

As the term suggests, the purpose of this form of writing is to persuade the reader to change attitudes and/or behaviours in some way. Persuasive writing is most effective if the writer is familiar with the readers' views or positions on an issue. This knowledge will help the writer determine if the writing is to reinforce, shape, or reverse the opinion of the reader. Letters to legislators and to the editors of newspapers and magazines, as well as editorials and commentaries, are common examples of persuasive writing.

For the purpose of this learning experience, determine if you will have students merely plan and write the letter, or if it will actually be sent to an intended audience. Before mailing the letters, be sure to consider school policies, parental concerns, and other potential implications.

Suggestions for Students

Planning Persuasive Writing:

- Decide what issue you will write about and clearly define the issue.
- Consider who your intended readers will be and what views they may hold on the issue.
- Brainstorm a variety of strategies you can use to gain reader support for your view on the issue. These might include acknowledging the readers' current viewpoints, listing benefits of the view you are promoting, providing reliable evidence, and using sound reasoning.
- Develop logical and ethical arguments. Avoid purely emotional rhetoric.
- Conduct necessary research to collect evidence, examples, and support for the view that you are promoting.
- Develop an outline to follow when you begin writing.

Writing Persuasively:

- Determine the pattern and style of writing that best suits your purpose and that will assist the reader in processing your information.
- Decide whether you will state your view right at the start of the letter, followed by supporting evidence and reasoning (direct approach), or whether you will discuss the issue and present your arguments before finally stating your view specifically near the end (indirect approach).
- In the direct approach, consider using your strongest argument immediately upon stating your viewpoint, followed by other points and evidence. In the indirect approach, develop your position to lead up to your strongest argument at the end.
- Select the voice most appropriate to establish your credibility as perceived by your readers; avoid "talking down to" or insulting your readers.
- Keep letters short, precise, and well organized.
- Develop a strong introductory statement to engage the reader's attention and an effective conclusion to maximize the impact on the reader.

Posting The Letter (optional)