

Chapter 22

Writing Workshop

Persuasive Essay

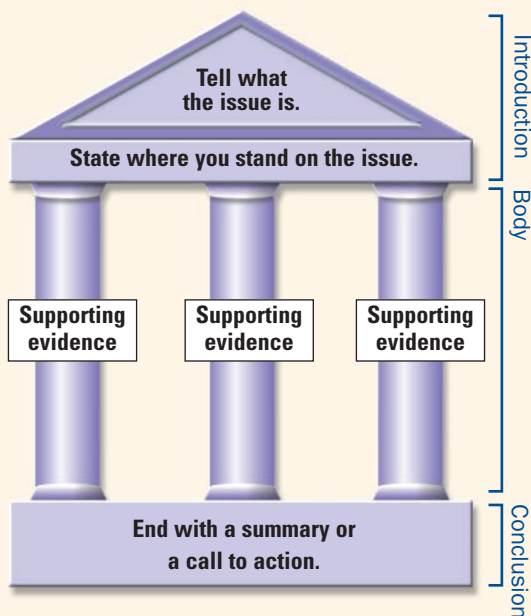


Learn What It Is

Advertisements, editorials, and petitions are several of the means by which others try to persuade you to act or think in certain ways. From time to time, you yourself need to persuade others. Here's how to go about writing an effective **persuasive essay**.

Basics in a Box

PERSUASIVE ESSAY AT A GLANCE

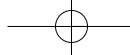


RUBRIC

Standards for Writing

A successful persuasive essay should

- clearly state the issue and your position on it in the introduction
- use language appropriate to the audience you're trying to convince
- support your position with facts, statistics, and reasons
- answer possible objections to your position
- provide clear reasoning
- conclude with a summary of your position or a call to action



See How It's Done: *Persuasive Essay*

Student Model

Misha Dworsky
Walt Whitman High School

RUBRIC IN ACTION

Extracurricular Sports Should Satisfy State Physical Education Requirement

Track, football, soccer, baseball, basketball, and other sports attract dedicated student athletes who often practice every day after school and then participate in weekend games. Should these students be forced to give up an elective class period to take a required physical education class? In order to meet the state's physical education (P.E.) course requirements, that is exactly what Whitman High School asks them to do. I believe that this policy doesn't make any sense. Instead, the [Montgomery County public schools] should exempt student athletes from taking P.E. classes.

First of all, participating in an extracurricular sport meets the objectives of the state's course requirements. Those objectives are to promote fitness and improve athletic skill, according to the Whitman course catalog. Involvement in either a varsity or a club sport for one season already makes a student fit and athletically skilled.

A second reason to change the policy is that the physical education requirement forces students to give up an elective class period. High school students can generally choose only eight elective courses from dozens of class offerings. By eliminating the P.E. requirement for student athletes, the county would give students more freedom in selecting their courses.

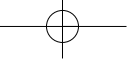
Another reason to exempt student athletes is that regular P.E. classes would not be so crowded. A large portion of the student body participates in either varsity or club sports. With smaller classes, teachers could provide more supervision during class periods and be more responsive to student feedback. Students in those classes would have a greater chance to improve their athletic skills and confidence.

1 Starts by asking a provocative question

2 Clearly states the topic and the writer's position on it

3 Gives reasons in a logical order

4 Supports reasons with facts, examples, and observations



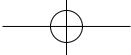
Finally, exposing students to different sports is one goal of the P.E. requirement, but this objective alone is not important enough to require students to take P.E. class. Students seldom take P.E. class as seriously as they would an extracurricular sport, so students do not always appreciate sports they sample in P.E. class. Also, students have elementary and middle school P.E. classes to try a variety of sports. Most students have already chosen a favorite sport on which to concentrate by the time they reach high school, so it is not worthwhile to make students spend class time experimenting with different sports.

Varsity and club sports require a great deal of time and effort from athletes. The county should recognize that team sports encourage physical activity more effectively than P.E. class and spark more enthusiasm from students. It is more important for student athletes to become well-rounded academically by taking electives than to take P.E. class, since they already understand the value of fitness.

5 Uses transitions to make the logical connections clear

6 Answers possible objections to the writer's position

7 Concludes by clearly restating the writer's position



Do It Yourself

Writing Prompt

Decide on an issue you have clear feelings about and write a persuasive essay to gain support for your position.

Purpose To persuade

Audience The community, friends, classmates, family

1 Prewriting

List possible topics. You may already know exactly what you want to write about. If not, use the following techniques to get your ideas flowing.

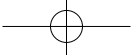
- **Search the newspaper.** With a group of classmates, conduct a newspaper search. Look through several issues for news items, editorials, political cartoons, and letters to the editor that grab your interest or spark strong agreement or disagreement.
- **Take an opinion poll.** Interview several students and adults to get their response to this question: What is the most important issue facing us today?
- **Recall arguments.** Think of topics that you have recently argued about or heard others argue about. Would one of these topics be appropriate for presentation to a larger audience?
- **Complete this sentence.** Find as many ways as you can to complete this sentence: This school would be a better place if _____.

Narrow your choices. After you have compiled a list of topics, look it over and pick the one or two topics that interest you most. Then evaluate each choice by asking yourself these questions.

- **Is the topic too big? too small?** If a topic is the subject of great, ongoing controversy, it may be too large to handle in a relatively short essay. However, the topic may have an angle or aspect that you could handle. For example, while censorship in general is too large a topic, censorship of your student newspaper is not.

A topic can also be too narrow. If you're considering writing about litter on one corner of your block, you probably should look deeper into environmental issues in your community.

- **Is the topic significant?** If most people already share your position—or if few people consider it important—you might want to consider a different topic.



Consider your audience. The **purpose** of your essay is to make people see things your way. In order to do this, you will need to know who your readers are. Ask yourself these questions.

- What approach will work best with my readers?
- What do they know? What do they need to know?
- Do they agree or disagree with my position, or are they neutral?

Solidify your position. Once you've selected a possible topic, try these methods to discover and strengthen your opinions.

- **Freewrite to explore your topic.** Freewriting about your topic will help you discover what interests you most about it and help you find key points to include in your argument.
- **Examine your ideas.** When you review your freewriting, look for statements that pinpoint your basic position on the issue. Then look for statements that support your position.
- **Think about the other side.** Write down all the arguments that someone might use to support the opposite position. Review your freewriting for statements you could use to counter the opposing arguments.

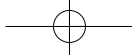
Gather your evidence. Your feelings alone probably will not sway many readers. To convince your audience, support your opinions with the kinds of details described below.

Supporting Details

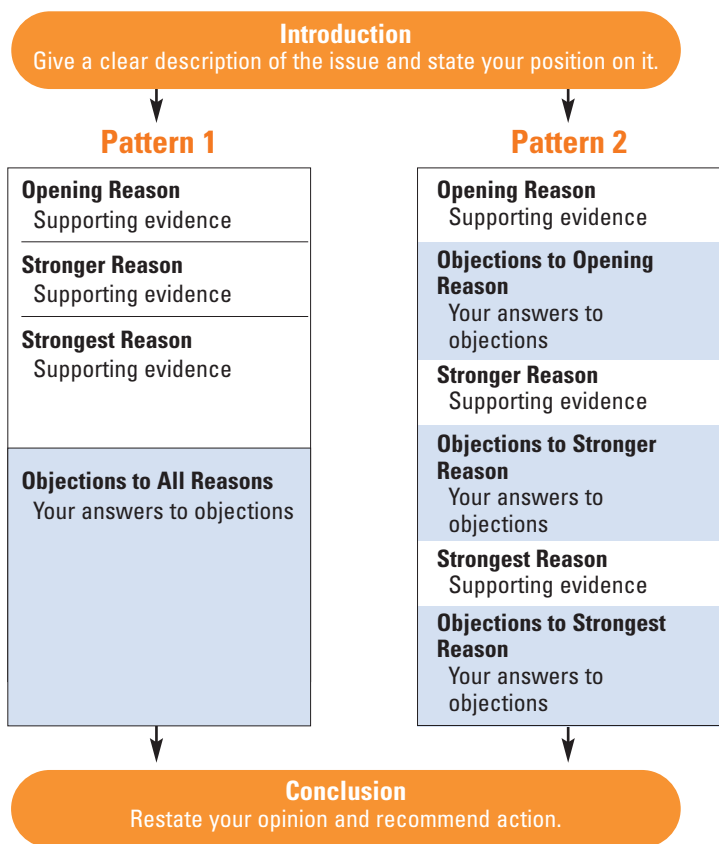
Facts and statistics	Information that can be proved true and numbers that quantify it
Examples	Instances that illustrate your point
Anecdotes	Brief stories that reinforce your ideas
Observations	Reports of events witnessed by you or by people your audience would trust
Expert opinion	Informed opinions expressed by authorities on the subject

2 Drafting

You may want to begin your essay with a **thesis statement** that clearly shows your position. As you write, you probably will discard some arguments from your notes and develop other arguments to replace them. If you find your opinion changing as you write, be sure to revise your thesis statement. Remember, your arguments should support your thesis.

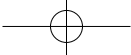


Choose a pattern of organization. Here are two ways you can structure your essay. In both patterns you present your arguments and answer possible objections to your position.



Use logical arguments. To make your argument convincing, make sure your ideas are based on sound logic. Use clear transitions and watch out for logical fallacies—arguments based on faulty reasoning—that you should avoid.

- **Circular reasoning**—trying to prove a statement by repeating it in different words (“A new gym is essential because we need it.”)
- **Overgeneralization**—making a statement that is too broad to prove (“Everyone loves to swim.”)
- **Either/or fallacy**—claiming that there are only two possible solutions when there are many (“Either we raise new taxes or the roads will become unusable.”)
- **Cause-and-effect fallacy**—assuming that because one event follows another, the first event caused the second (“A new mayor was elected in November, and as a result, crime went down in January.”)



3 Revising

TARGET SKILL ► Supporting Personal Opinion with Facts Your opinion alone will not sway many readers. Support it with facts.

First of all, participating in an extracurricular sport meets *Those objectives are to promote fitness and improve athletic skill, according to the Whitman course catalog.* the objectives of the state's course requirements. [^] Involvement in either a varsity or a club sport ~~is good for students.~~ *for one season already makes a student fit and athletically skilled.*


4 Editing and Proofreading

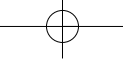
TARGET SKILL ► Correcting Run-Ons When two or more sentences are written as though they were one sentence, the result is confusion for the reader. Change one sentence into a subordinate clause, join the sentences with a semicolon or coordinating conjunction, or make two sentences.

Finally, exposing students to different sports is one goal of the P.E. requirement. ^{but} [^] this objective alone is not important enough to require students to take P.E. class.

5 Sharing and Reflecting

When you have finished revising your persuasive essay, **share** it with an audience. You could read it as part of a debate, present it as a speech, or adapt it as a letter to the editor of your local paper. Ask your classmates for feedback on your presentation.

For Your Working Portfolio After sharing, **reflect** on what you learned in writing the essay. What did you learn about your feelings concerning your subject? What did you learn that can be applied to other writing? Attach your answers to your finished work. Save your persuasive essay in your  **Working Portfolio**.



Real World Persuasive Essay

The persuasive essay is a common form of expression in the real world. Newsgroups on the Internet allow people to post their ideas and opinions on important issues. Advertisements try to persuade you to use a certain product or service. You've probably seen persuasive essays in

- letters to the editor
- magazine articles and advertisements
- junk-mail advertisements
- Internet newsgroups
- newspaper editorials
- public-service posters

Text not available
for use on CD-
ROM. Please
refer to the text
in the textbook.