**Writing a Persuasive Essay**

As you read in his essay “A Defense of the Jury System,” Thomas M. Ross has strong feelings about the jury system. What issue do you care about, and how can you get others to care about the issue, too? One way to share your views and convince others to accept them is to write persuasively. In a **persuasive essay**your goal will be to state your opinion clearly and support it with reasons and evidence.

**Prewriting****: Choose an Issue**

|  |
| --- |
| **A Powerful Issue**   For your persuasive essay, consider **issues** that stir up strong feelings in you and in others. What situations make you and other people angry, sad, or enthusiastic? List a few issues that you really care about. Then, pick the one you have the strongest views about and the one about which you can gather enough evidence to defend your position. Keep in mind that your essay should be at least 1,500 words, so choose an issue that is interesting enough to hold readers’ interest in a paper of that length. |

Write an Opinion Statement

|  |
| --- |
| **Get on Your Soapbox**You probably already know where you stand on your issue. Share your clear and well–defined **perspective** with readers by drafting an opinion statement (also known as a thesis statement). Your **opinion statement**should clearly state both the issue and your position on it. One student brainstormed the following issues and positions as he developed an opinion statement. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Position** |
| Recycling | Helps to protect our natural resources. |
| People who ride motorcycles | Should be required to wear helmets. |
| Banning bicycles on idewalks | Would force riders onto unsafe streets. |

Keep your own opinion statement in mind to help you focus your ideas as you plan and draft your *essay*.

Consider Your Purpose and Audience

**Your Readers Await You**   In a persuasive essay your **purpose** is to convince readers to share your opinion or to take the action you suggest. In order to persuade your readers effectively, you must understand them. Think about your **audience**by jotting down answers to the following questions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **•** | **What will make my audience care about this issue?**Identify specific ways in which the topic affects your readers’ lives. |
| **•** |  **What concerns might my audience have?**Consider how your issue looks from their point of view, or **bias.**For example, some readers may think that recycling is too expensive. Take this objection, or **counterclaim,**into account as you support your position. |
| **•** |  **What will my audience expect from my essay?**Consider aspects of the issue about which readers might want more information. They will expect your essay to provide solid information to help them make a decision. |

**Gather Support for Your Position**

**Back It Up**   To be convincing, give at least three strong **reasons**to support your opinion statement. Your reasons will tell why you believe your position is correct and may include **rhetorical devices**that appeal to your readers’ logic, emotions, or ethical beliefs.

|  |
| --- |
| * A **logical appeal**speaks to readers’ common sense and logic. Logical appeals make sense.
* An **emotional appeal**is aimed at readers’ hearts. Emotional appeals speak to emotions such as fear, love, sympathy, and pride.
* An **ethical appeal**addresses readers’ sense of right and wrong. Ethical appeals also rely on a reader’s belief that the writer is ethical. Here are the reasons the student writer developed.
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Opinion Statement:**Recycling is the best way to preserve natural resources and to reduce the costs of processing garbage.**Reasons:** 1. It saves precious resources. (logical appeal)2. It keeps us from being buried in trash.    (emotional appeal) 3. It reduces the garbage we produce. (ethical     appeal) |

Create a chart like the one above in which you write your opinion statement and list at least three reasons to support it. As you create your chart, keep in mind that you teacher may want you to have more logical appeals than emotional or ethical appeals.

**The Evidence Suggests…**   Provide at least two pieces of **evidence**to support each of your reasons. The following chart shows examples of the kinds of evidence you can provide to present a tightly reasoned argument. No matter which types of evidence you include, make sure your evidence is **relevant,**or clearly related to your issue. Precise, specific evidence will help readers better understand your position and will be more convincing than vague evidence.

**Plan Your Draft**

**Get Your Information in Order**To be its most persuasive, your essay should move **smoothly and logically**from one idea to the next. Decide now how to organize the reasons that support your opinion statement. Readers will best remember ideas presented at the end of the essay and at the beginning. Therefore, you might want to put your second strongest reason in the first body paragraph and your strongest reason in the final body paragraph. Place remaining reasons in between.

|  |
| --- |
| A Writer’s Framework  |
|  Introduction  |
| Grab your readers’ interest with an attention getter.Give background information so readers understand the issue.Present an opinion statement that identifies the issue and states your opinion on it. |
|  Body  |
| Provide at least three reasons that support your opinion statement.Give at least two pieces of evidence to support each reason.Organize the reasons and evidence logically. |
|  Conclusion  |
| Restate your opinion.Summarize your reasons, or include a call to action—a sentence that tells readers what you want them to do. |

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|

|  |
| --- |
| Rubric: Writing a Persuasive Essay |
| **Evaluation Questions** | **Tips** |  **Revision Techniques**  |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | Does the introduction express a clear opinion statement? |

 |  **Bracket**the opinion statement. |  **Add**an opinion statement that identifies the issue and states an opinion on it. |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2.** | Do at least three reasons support the opinion statement? Do the reasons include logical, emotional, or ethical appeals? |

 |  **Underline**each reason. **Label** logical appeals with an *L,* emotional appeals with an *E,*and ethical appeals with an *H.*  |  **Add**reasons. **Elaborate**on existing reasons so that they appeal to readers’ logic, emotions, or ethics. Make sure the appeals are balanced. |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3.** | Do at least two pieces of evidence support each reason? |

 |  **Circle**each piece of evidence, and **draw an arrow** to the reason it supports. |  **Add**evidence for each reason. **Rearrange**evidence so that it is in the paragraph with the reason it supports. |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **4.** | Is the organization logical and effective? |

 |  **Number**each reason with a rank (1 for strongest, and so on). |  **Rearrange** paragraphs to put the strongest reason first or last. |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5.** | Are possible reader counterclaims addressed? |

 |  **Put a plus sign** by any sentence that addresses a reader counterclaim. |  **Add**sentences that identify and respond to reader counterclaims. |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **6.** | Does the conclusion restate the writer’s opinion? Does it include a summary of reasons or a call to action? |

 |  **Put a box** around the restatement of the writer’s opinion. **Highlight**the summary of reasons or the call to action. | **Add**a sentence that restates the position. **Add**a summary of reasons or a call to action. |

 |  |
| http://my.hrw.com/images/points/1.gif |  |