

Higher Folio

Essay 2

Persuasive Writing

per·suade

/pər'swād/

Verb

1. Cause (someone) to do something through reasoning or argument.
2. Cause (someone) to believe something, esp. after a sustained effort; convince.

Synonyms

convince - induce - coax - prevail - argue

A Pupil Guide

Read this!

- Your Writing portfolio is worth 30% of your overall Higher grade. The other 70% will come from the exam.
- For your portfolio you have to produce **two** essays – one which is discursive and one which is creative.
- We will focus on producing a **persuasive essay** for the discursive piece and a **personal reflective** essay for the creative piece.
- You will want to produce writing which is utterly amazing and shows what a talented writer you are.
- There is a word limit to your folio pieces – each essay must be no more than 1,300 words so no waffling on for pages and pages. Be clear, be concise but be brilliant.

We're going to start by working on Persuasive Writing as it will probably take you longer to complete.

What is a Persuasive Essay Anyway?

The starting point of any piece of discursive writing, whether argumentative or persuasive, is to choose a topic which is controversial or which you feel strongly about – this could be anything from animal rights to plastic surgery; sexism in advertising to religious teaching in schools. You will have to look at the various arguments which surround your chosen subject and explore these to some extent in your essay.

However, the goal of a persuasive essay is to convince your reader that your viewpoint is the right viewpoint. In a persuasive essay, you pull out all the stops to say, "It's my way or the highway!" Unlike **argumentative essays**, where facts reign supreme, you don't necessarily have to use researched, absolute facts to support your persuasive argument. The goal of your persuasive essay is to persuade by any means necessary. If that involves including emotional anecdotes or stories instead of facts, that's fine.

Don't believe me? Ask any politician. When it comes to powers of persuasion, the facts don't necessarily matter.

While including actual facts and evidence can be an effective way to persuade, it's okay to play dirty in a persuasive essay. Make your readers laugh, cry, or quake in fear as long as it gets them to believe that what you are saying is true.

That said, you can't go in and write your essay without any direction. To really persuade someone in your persuasive essay, you have to be *smooth*. You have to have finesse. To be smooth and *finesseful* (not a word, by the way), you should start with an outline.

Persuasive Essay Introduction

First, it's important to select a topic that you can take a stand for.

Let's say we're writing about women in work, we wouldn't just introduce the topic as "women in work" we'd look to take a point of view on the issue. For example - **Why are women not making the top positions in businesses?**

Once you have your topic, you can go about writing an introduction to your essay. Here are some hints and tips to help you.

Write a hook. Always start your introduction with a strong hook. Make your audience *want* to read your essay.

For example, *"In an ideal world, women would be represented fairly in all walks of life. However reality paints a different picture in business where women are not making it to the top positions."*

Background Information. This is where you need to explain what your topic is and why it is controversial or important to you.

For example, *"It is well known that women do not receive the same opportunities as men in business, but why is this? In Britain we have legislation in place to ensure gender equality. However this aim is not being met. Some might argue that it is the woman's job to reinforce this legislation. However it is not nearly as straightforward as this..."*

Present your point of view. Here is where you get to the meat of your persuasive essay and define the exact viewpoint that you want your audience to adopt.

Much as you would in an argumentative essay, you must take a stance on your topic. No wishy-washy "eh, I could go either way" stuff allowed.

Pick a side. Stick to it. Defend it to the end!

For example, *"women...have so many obstacles already up against them: tough personal decisions, conscious and unconscious bias, discrimination, and stereotyping."*

Now it's your turn to think about the structure of your introduction.

Your Introduction

First of all, give me an idea of the topic you have chosen. Remember that this can't be something generic like 'animal rights' or 'the death penalty'. You have to state what your point of view is as this will help you form your subsequent arguments.

My topic is:

Once you have your topic you have to think about how you're going to **hook** the reader into your essay. You could use a quotation from a famous person, include some "shocking statistics" or ask your reader a rhetorical question to get them thinking about the topic you have chosen.

My hook is:

Next up is some background information on your topic. Why is it so controversial? Why is it important to you?

Background information:

Finally, state your position. This is a sentence stating your opinion about the topic and will be proven in the rest of your essay with three strong reasons and support.

I am in favour of/against/....
I believe/do not believe...

Because

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Persuasive Essay Body Paragraphs

The exact number of body paragraphs you include will depend on your topic. For the purpose of this guide, I'm including four example reasons.

Body Paragraph 1

- **Reason #1.** Women face hard choices between professional success and personal desires.
- **Fact or example 1:** If women have children they need to be flexible. Having the top job in a company does not allow you to have this flexibility.
- **Fact or example 2:** Many women give up their career in order to look after their children. 48% of women claimed having children was the biggest obstacle they had in pursuing a successful career.

Body Paragraph 2

- **Reason #2.** Bias against women excludes them from certain jobs.
- **Fact or example 1:** Some small businesses cannot afford to pay for maternity leave or to spare time introducing someone new to fill the position.
- **Fact or example 2:** "Small businesses should be exempt from employing women of childbearing age because the cost of maternity leave could cripple them..." ([Sylvia Tidy-Harris womenspeakers.co.uk](http://SylviaTidy-Harris.womenspeakers.co.uk)) – when profit is involved women will be penalised for their childbearing capability.

Body Paragraph 3

- **Reason #3.** Discrimination against their sex and the resulting 'glass ceiling' stops women progressing.
- **Fact or example 1:** 'Glass ceiling' is an invisible barrier that women cannot seem to break through; discrimination against them when hiring as the majority of interviewers will be men who are looking to hire people like themselves - men.
- **Fact or example 2:** The glass ceiling can affect a woman's self-esteem – they feel they are not as valued as their male counterparts.

Body Paragraph 4

- **Reason #3.** Stereotyping that women experience affects their career choices.
- **Fact or example 1:** Stereotyping begins in school – 94% of girls are more likely to choose Home Economics whilst 78% of boys are likely to take Physics. In further education only 15% of women take engineering courses.
- **Fact or example 2:** Stereotyping is constantly reinforced, women are under-represented in some sectors and therefore will not make senior roles. We need to eradicate this stereotyping as early as possible.

Each reason you come up with can be emotionally charged, logically irrefutable, or ethically binding—so long as it's persuasive. In addition, each persuasive reason you offer should be supported by a fact or an example. You will need to use the internet, newspapers, television news, factual tv programmes or films to help you research your arguments and provide you with suitable facts or examples.

Two important points about researching facts or examples:

1. Keep a note of your sources – write down web addresses, names of newspapers, headlines etc. These will need to be included in a **bibliography** at the end of your essay.
2. Make sure that you write up any information using **your own words**. You can use short quotations to back up your statements but you cannot copy huge chunks of information because that is plagiarism and that will make me very, very angry. I know how to use Google too, so don't even try it!

The Main Body of YOUR Essay

Reason #1

Fact or Example

Source

Fact or Example

Source

Reason #2

Fact or Example

Source

Fact or Example

Source

Reason #3

Fact or Example

Source

Fact or Example

Source

Reason #4

Fact or Example

Source

Fact or Example

Source

Persuasive Essay Conclusion

Now that you have outlined your reasons and supporting facts and examples, it's time to seal the deal in your essay's conclusion. Your conclusion should contain the following important components:

1. **Brief summary.** Remind your audience of why this topic is important.

For example, *"How can we expect women to have the top business roles and be represented equally with men when they have so much to compete with?"*

2. **Benefits to/Impact on the reader.** Explain how acting on this issue will benefit your audience or make it clear what will happen if no action is taken.

For example, *"Women face challenges at every step of the career ladder, whether that's down to personal choices, gender stereotyping, or worse, discrimination. If these obstacles continue to exist, it is unlikely that we'll ever see change and gender equality in senior positions."*

3. **A call to action.** What do you want your readers to do now that they've (hopefully) subscribed to your viewpoint on the topic?

For example, *"Women need a new strategy, and a stronger voice, so those few women who have achieved success against all the odds need to step up their game and help force change."*

Brief summary:

Benefits to/Impact on the reader:

A call to action:

GET ON WITH IT!

Ok, we've done the thinking and the note-taking and the planning. Let's not delay the inevitable any longer – it's time to write your essay.

Remember, your persuasive essay should put flesh on the bare bones of your notes. You may need to explain your arguments in a bit more detail or use language techniques to help you persuade your reader. There are specific techniques that you can employ in persuasive writing to make your essays stylish and convincing:

Colloquial / Chatty style	Rhetorical questions	Use contrasting ideas/images	Criticise opponent	Use personal pronouns	Shock tactics
Hyperbole	Emotive language	Play on the reader's guilt	Short Sentences	Humour	Quote an expert
Use statistics	Clusters of three	Forceful phrases	Imagery	Repetition	Play on sympathy
Figures of speech	Memorable words/phrases	Anecdote			

However, the main eight that you might want to focus on are:

Power of three	Including lists of three items/reasons in your writing.
Emotive language	Words, phrases and imagery that arouse an emotional response.
Rhetorical questions	Questions to get your audience thinking – they don't require an answer
Say again	Repeating the same word, phrase or idea more than once for emphasis.
Undermine opposing views	Destroy/criticise the opposing argument.
Anecdote	Including little stories to illustrate a point.
Direct address	Involve your audience by speaking to them directly using personal pronouns and shared experiences.
Exaggeration	Being over-the-top to get a point across.

And if you take the first letter from all of those techniques they handily spell out **PERSUADE**.

It's now up to you to type up the first draft of your essay using the information you've gathered. Remember your **word limit** is **1,300 words** and you need to include a **bibliography** listing all of the sources you use. **DO NOT PLAGARISE INFORMATION – if you do you will be referred to the Head of Department and you risk being kicked off the course.**