



THE PURPOSE OF PERSUASIVE TEXTS

Writers compose persuasive texts to influence readers to accept an opinion, buy a product, adopt an idea, take a particular action or believe their interpretation of specific facts. Some persuasive texts aim to influence readers to believe one point of view over another, while others may present only a single point of view.

Persuasive texts that present a single viewpoint or opinion may contain bias – the unfair presentation of one side of an argument as more valid than another. Because the writer is attempting to convince readers to accept a certain idea or point of view, persuasive texts require some analytical thinking by the reader.

Unfortunately, some people approach persuasive texts as if they are informative, which means they may be tempted to accept the content as true when it is actually just someone's opinion.

Examples of persuasive texts include essays, advertisements, letters to the editor, book blurbs and speeches.

THE STRUCTURE OF PERSUASIVE TEXTS

Persuasive texts often contain an introduction, followed by a series of paragraphs presenting key points, and a conclusion. They usually contain facts and details organised in a logical manner and presented systematically. Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence, which is developed with supporting evidence, examples, facts, details and other content designed to reinforce a key idea.

In a persuasive text, ideas are supported by evidence. The skilful use of evidence can help a good writer convince readers to adopt a particular point of view about a topic.

THE LANGUAGE FEATURES OF PERSUASIVE TEXTS

The structural and language features of persuasive texts include:

- introduction, main body and conclusion
- paragraphs introduced by a topic sentence
- a central line of argument that can be traced throughout the text
- details, facts, examples and other material that support the line of argument
- restatement of the main points of the argument in a conclusion
- quotations from authorities and other sources
- level of language suited to the target audience
- rhetorical questions
- exaggeration
- simplification or generalisation
- repetition
- contrast and comparison
- emotive language
- language that is high in modality (for example, words such as *must* rather than *should* or *will* rather than *might*).

TIP

Modality in language refers to the way we express the truth of an idea. Modal verbs carry a judgment about the likelihood of a particular event occurring. Nine common modal verbs are: **can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should** and **must**.



PERSUASIVE TEXT CHECKLIST



When writing a persuasive text of your own, ask yourself these questions to ensure that your text has the language features and structure of the persuasive form.

- ☒ Is the language level appropriate to the target audience?
- ☒ Has the main argument (thesis) been summarised?
- ☒ Does the text present the strongest (or most persuasive) idea first?
- ☒ Does it contain a lot of evaluative adjectives (for example, *very*, *most*, *always*)?
- ☒ Have I used a range of imagery-creating techniques (such as metaphors and personification)?
- ☒ Has one view been presented as more accurate than all opposing views?
- ☒ Have I presented opposing views and then dismantled them effectively?
- ☒ Have I quoted other authorities to support my argument?
- ☒ Have I used topic sentences to begin each new paragraph?
- ☒ Have I included details that support each point (for example, quotes, descriptions, examples and evidence)?
- ☒ Has factual information been included?
- ☒ If necessary, has statistical data been presented?
- ☒ Have I referred to recent research?
- ☒ Have I asked rhetorical questions?
- ☒ Is exaggeration employed to prove a particular point?
- ☒ Have I repeated key ideas, words and phrases for emphasis?
- ☒ Have I used emotive language effectively?
- ☒ Is my language of appraisal high in modality (for example, words such as *must* rather than *should*, or *will* rather than *might*)?
- ☒ Are connective words used to link ideas?
- ☒ Have I used contrast and comparison to highlight key ideas?
- ☒ Have I asked questions to reinforce main points?

Language features specific to advertising texts

- ☒ Does the text capture the **attention** of the reader?
- ☒ Will the text engage and **interest** the reader throughout?
- ☒ Does the text create a **desire** for the reader to accept the idea (or buy the product)?
- ☒ Does the text end with a call to **action**?