:
Persuasive Essays

To persuade is to convince someone that a particular opinion, action, or point of view is the correct one.
For example, commercials are a form of persuasion; advertisers attempt to persuade viewers that their product is the best one to purchase.
In a persuasive essay, the writer must present a clear assertion (thesis) and then provide back up, with opinions being supported by proof, including facts and statistics.

Persuasive Thesis
The writer begins a persuasive essay by stating distinctly what he or she is arguing for or against. Words like **should, ought,** and **must** are especially effective in the thesis statement of a persuasive essay. For example:
> Pet animals should be allowed in children's hospital rooms because they speed healing.
> Companies should not be allowed to conduct random drug testing on employees.
> The federal government should (should not) prohibit the sale of handguns through the mail.

Methods of Persuasion
The writer continues by providing support for the thesis by:
> **Providing Facts:** Because the writer needs to appeal to the reader's mind, not just his emotions, facts and statistics will bolster the argument. The source of the facts should be clear. Vague statements like "everyone knows that" or "they all say" should be avoided
> **Referring to an authority:**   An authority is an expert, an accepted source of unbiased facts and information.
> **Examples:** Examples help strengthen an argument, but those that are not typical enough should not be included. That a friend was once bitten by a dog does not adequately prove that all dogs are dangerous pets.
> **Predicting the consequence:** This helps the reader visualize what will occur *if the circumstances described in the thesis do or do not happen.* However, the writer should avoid exaggerating the consequence. For instance, telling the reader, "If you don't eat fresh fruit every day, you will never be truly healthy," overstates the results, making the reader suspicious and invalidating the thesis.

Sample Persuasive Paragraph
　　　Passengers **should** refuse to ride in any vehicle driven by someone who has been drinking. First and most important, such a refusal could save lives. The National Council on Alcoholism reports that drunk driving causes 25,000 deaths and 50% of all traffic accidents each year. Second, riders might tell themselves that some people drive well even after a few drinks, but this is just not true. Dr. Burton Belloc of the Alcoholism Treatment Center explains that even one drink can lengthen the reflex time and weaken the judgment needed for safe driving. Finally, by refusing to ride with a drinker, one passenger could influence other passengers or the driver. For example, Marie Furillo, a student at Central High School, was offered a ride home from three friends who had obviously been drinking. She refused, despite the driver's teasing. Hearing Marie's refusal, two of her friends got out of the car. Until the laws are changed and a vast re-education takes place, the bloodshed on American highways will probably continue. But there is one thing people can do: they can refuse to risk their lives for the sake of a party.

> *The thesis clearly states what the writer believes and identifies the takeaway message for the reader.*
> *The first argument* **predicts the consequence:** *if passengers refuse to ride with drinkers, lives could be saved.*
> *The writer also supports this reason with* **facts: drunk driving causes 25,000 deaths…each year.**
> *The second argument is really an* **answer to the opposition** *by pointing out that some people believe they drive well even after having a few drinks.*
> *The writer supports this reason by* **referring to an authority,** *giving the opinion of someone who can provide unbiased and valuable information about the subject. "Dr. Burton Belloc. . ."*
> *The final argument uses a* **relevant example***. "Marie Furillo, a student at …"*
> **Persuasive paragraphs can either begin with the most important reason and then continue with less important ones, or they can begin with the least important reasons, saving the most important for last.**