

Argumentative vs. Persuasive Writing

Subtle, but Significant, Differences



Goal of ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING:

To get reader to acknowledge that your side is valid and deserves consideration as another point of view.

Goal of PERSUASIVE WRITING:

To get reader to agree with you/your point of view on a particular topic.

General technique of argumentative writing:

Offers the reader relevant reasons, credible facts, and sufficient evidence to support that the writer has a valid and worthy perspective.

General technique of persuasive writing:

Blends facts and emotion in attempt to convince the reader that the writer is “right.”(Often relies heavily on opinion.)

Starting point of argumentative writing:

Research a topic and *then* align with one side.

Starting point of persuasive writing:

Identify a topic *and* your side.

Viewpoint used in argumentative writing:

Acknowledge that opposing views exist, not only to hint at what a fair-minded person you are, but to give you the opportunity to counter these views tactfully in order to show why you feel that your own view is the more worthy one to hold.

Writer presents multiple perspectives, although is clearly for one side.

Viewpoint used in persuasive writing:

Persuasion has a single-minded goal. It is based on a personal conviction that a particular way of thinking is the only sensible way to think. Writer presents one side— his side.

(Persuasive writing *may* include ONE opposing point, it is then quickly dismissed/refuted.)

Audience of argumentative writing:

Doesn’t need an audience to convince. The writer is content with simply putting it out there.

Audience of persuasive writing:

Needs intended audience. Knowing what they think and believe, the writer “attacks” attempting to persuade them to his side.

Attitude of argumentative writing:

Simply to get the reader to consider you have an idea worthy of listening to. The writer is sharing a conviction, whether the audience ends up agreeing or not.

Attitude of persuasive writing:

Persuasive writers want to gain another “vote” so they “go after” readers more aggressively. Persuasive writing is more personal, more passionate, more emotional.

Excerpted from 2011 Smekens Education Solutions, Inc. www.SmekensEducation.com