ELEMENTS OF PERSUASIVE WRITING

APPEAL TO REASON (a.k.a. rational appeal)

DEFINITION: This is persuasive writing that appeals to the part of humans that likes to think. It tries to persuade us by giving what appear to be good, solid reasons to share the author’s point of view. It uses facts, definitions, cause and effect, etc.

EXAMPLE: Many studies show that the most successful way for a student to improve his reading level is to read!

EXAMPLE: Approximately forty percent of students claim that they do not do their homework regularly.

APPEAL TO AUTHORITY

DEFINITION: This is when writers rely on their authority, credibility, or general character. They present themselves as trustworthy. They may have education or personal experience that makes them an authority, or they may get their information from others who do, mentioning experts as sources to lend credibility.

EXAMPLE: The English teachers know from experience that the most successful students are those who come to school every day, pay attention in class, and complete all class assignments.

EXAMPLE: As a soccer-enthusiast I can assure you that this is a sport that will not only improve your cardiovascular health, enhance your hand-to-foot co-ordination, and boost your self-confidence, but will also increase your sense of overall well-being.

EMOTIONAL APPEAL

DEFINITION: This is when the writer appeals to powerful emotions, such as our love of country, family, peace, and justice, as well as to our fear and hatred of the things that threaten us.

EXAMPLE: Students, if you truly care about your future career, you will study, study, study!

EXAMPLE: If you care about your pets, butt out your cigarette.

PERSUATION

DO’S

- Organize your writing

- Use a hook

- Provide plenty of examples

- Incorporate facts as well as opinions

- Consider your audience

- Consider their counter-arguments

- End with appeal!

DON’TS

- Talk down to or threaten your audience

- Use the bandwagon argument

- Be vague

- Be overly negative

- Try to distract your reader

Remember…

- Repetition, repetition, repetition…

- Cause and effect

- Sentence variety

- Analogies

- Hyperbole