



Persuasive Language

INTRODUCTION TO ETHOS, PATHOS & LOGOS

**ARISTOTLE** was a Greek philosopher who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. He was an influential thinker and wrote on many subjects – from logic and ethics, to biology and metaphysics. One area, in which Aristotle was particularly interested, was *rhetoric*. That is, the art of persuasive speaking or writing. He even wrote a whole book entitled 'On Rhetoric' in which he explains his theories of persuasive language and speech. Most significantly, in this work he expounds on the concepts of **ethos**, **logos** and **pathos**, as tools for persuasive language. A lot can be learned about the art of persuasion from these three concepts, and once understood, they can be easily applied to our own persuasive speaking and writing.

**ETHOS**

**Ethos** is a Greek word meaning 'character'. In terms of persuasive language, it is an **appeal to authority and credibility**. *Ethos* is a means of convincing an audience of the reliable character or credibility of the speaker/writer, or the credibility of the argument.

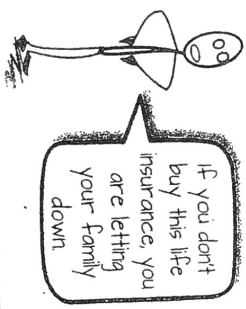
It is an important tool of persuasion because if you can get your audience to see you (or your argument) as credible and trustworthy, it will be much easier to persuade them.



**PATHOS**

**Pathos** is a Greek word meaning 'suffering' or 'experience', and it is used in persuasive speech as an **appeal to the emotions** of the audience. *Pathos* is the way of creating a persuasive argument by evoking an emotional response in the audience/reader.

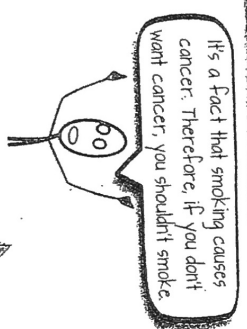
You can use *pathos* when trying to persuade, by appealing to an audience's hopes and dreams, playing on their fears or worries, or appealing to their particular beliefs or ideals.



**LOGOS**

**Logos** is a Greek word meaning 'a word' or 'reason'. In rhetoric, it is an **appeal to logic and reason**. It is used to persuade an audience by logical thought, fact and rationality.

*Logos* can be a useful tool of persuasion because if you can 'prove' an argument through logical and sound reasoning, your audience is more likely to be persuaded.



If you can include a combination of these three elements, in your persuasive speaking and writing, you will appeal to your audience's emotions, sense of reasoning and belief in you, and therefore your writing will be more convincing. Try to subtly weave ethos, pathos and logos into your persuasive writing and speaking.

PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

LESS FOCUS ON ETHOS

Ethos is an appeal to ethics. It is a means of convincing the audience of the character or credibility of the persuader.

**How can you incorporate ethos?**

- You can openly remind your audience who you are and why you are an authority on the subject. (As the leading researcher, I agree...)
- You can establish authority more subtly through the use of jargon or specialized terms (My quantitative research in linguistic anthropology has shown...)
- You can establish credibility by just using correct grammar and language, using solid reasoning and good arguments and therefore sounding credible and trustworthy.

**EXAMPLES:**

- "I have been married for 58 years and I can tell you that he will not be a good husband to you."
- "Having written ten successful novels myself, I can tell you that this book is worth buying."
- "My friend, who has a PhD in nutritional science, says that we should eat fewer carbohydrates."

**Why use ethos?**

If your audience believe you to be a qualified, authoritative figure, or an expert in a subject, they are more likely to be persuaded by your argument.

**TASK ONE: For each of the following, identify whether or not ETHOS is used, and explain your reasoning.**

	Ethos?	Explain
1	Yes	"You should definitely get the new, your debt, & it's a trial as somebody with over 30 years experience of debt counselling."
2		"As your father, I love you and only want the best for you. Therefore when I ask you not to go, please listen to me."
3		"We really should try that recipe. Someone told me that it was good."
4		"The research – conducted by professors at Harvard University – suggests that you should learn a second language."
5		"Dentists all over the world are telling their patients the same things. You must floss regularly."
		"I read somewhere that bicarbonate of soda is really useful for cleaning. You should try it."

**TASK TWO: For each of the following scenarios, write your own persuasive sentences using ethos:**

1. You are trying to persuade your mother to let you get a tattoo.
2. You are attempting to convince an audience that animal testing is morally wrong.
3. You are trying to persuade your teacher not to give you homework.