



## HOW TO WRITE A PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT

### WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO LEARN THIS SKILL?

Persuasive words have power. The right words can help you get a job or a leadership position, they can help you convince people to care about the issues you care about, and can even help you in personal relationships.

It's not just about getting what you want. Learning how to persuade others effectively requires you to see an issue from their perspective. This requires greater empathy and emotional maturity.

### WHAT?

Use words wisely to persuade others to see your point of view.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- A computer or writing materials
- Someone to practice on (optional)

### WHAT TO DO:

01

**Define the issue and outcome to yourself.** Write down, in 1-2 sentences, who you need to persuade, about what, and what you want to have happen. This is just for your own use. Here are a couple of examples:

*I want the school canteen to stop using single use plastics. The issue for me is ocean plastic and the harm this does to animals.*

*I want my parents to allow me to get a part time job. The issue for me is that I want to earn some money and my friends are getting jobs.*

02

**Brainstorm every possible argument.** Look at what you want and think openly of ANY reason to support it. Jot all of them down no matter how silly they sound. When you run out of ideas, look at the ones you have already written and try to make up related ideas. Write them ALL down.

For example, if you want to get a part time job, you might write down that it will give you work experience. Then you might add that you need to keep up with others who are also beginning to get work experience because getting jobs is competitive. You could write that you need to try lots of different jobs because you have no idea about career direction at the moment. That's three related ideas: get work experience, be able to compete for jobs, and explore different workplaces.

### IT'S OKAY TO...

- not know what you want to do
- get knocked into the pit
- move faster or go slower
- fail (as long as you tried)

03

**Dig Deeper.** Keep going until you have AT LEAST TEN ideas. Yes, it is difficult, but the harder you dig the better the ideas usually become. If you are struggling, take a short break, then have a blitz session again, perhaps with a friend.

04

**Put yourself in their shoes.** Who is your audience? Who do you need to persuade? Sit back and think from THEIR point of view. (Set your own emotions aside for a moment.) Looking at all the ideas for arguments you've brainstormed, decide which ones will have the biggest appeal to your audience.

Circle or highlight the three ideas that you think will appeal to them the most – these are your strongest ideas.

05

**Place your three arguments in order.** Decide which of the arguments is strongest and put this argument LAST so that they remember this reason the most. The second strongest argument goes first. The third one you highlighted (plus any other really strong reasons) go in the middle. You might not use everything on your brainstorm list. Write down your sequence of arguments in a simple, bullet-point list.

06

**Gather supporting evidence.** Arguments are great, but proof holds weight. Make sure to research solid facts and evidence for each of the arguments. Some facts may be statistics or numbers, others may be quotations from authorities or well-researched events and evidence. Get ready with this proof for each of your arguments.

07

**Start drafting.** Write each of your arguments, perhaps one paragraph for each one. Try to make the paragraphs clear but engaging. Appeal to their emotions as well as their intelligence – using word pictures and descriptions will help. Find a way to present your evidence within each argument.

08

**Draft your start.** Yes, you are writing the beginning of your argument after writing the middle. Why? This approach allows you to lead up to your first argument with power and emotion. Make it clear what your position is but don't put them to sleep with phrases like: *'I am going to tell you why single-use plastics are bad for the environment'*.

Instead, grab the reader hard and don't let go!

**Picture a dolphin in the ocean, he's trying to swim but his flippers are tired. He is near to death from starvation. His mouth is held closed by a plastic ring. A ring that came from the rubbish in a regular canteen. His fate could easily be prevented if we banned single-use plastics.'**

There are several great ways to start strongly:

- **Start with action** – briefly describe something that really happened, then relate it to one of the reasons or emotions in your argument.
- **Use a question or a quotation** – choose carefully, it needs to be strong and to support your argument. Avoid lazy questions like *'Have you ever thought about plastics in the ocean?'* and push harder to questions like, *'When asked if you want a straw, what do you say?'*
- **Tell a story or an anecdote** – something that makes them curious, makes them laugh or entertains them but that is clearly related to the topic. Here's an example: *'I waited all my childhood to go to the Great Barrier Reef. I screamed with joy when my parents announced we were going the year I turned 12. But when I got there all I wanted to do was cry. The reef and the oceans are dying.'*

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- **Create a picture in their mind** – like the dolphin above, create a word picture that tugs on their emotions, but not too much or they'll stop reading!

09

**Write your ending.** Make sure the ending asks them to do what you want them to do – this is a 'Call to action'. Make it clear. You can also relate the ending to the beginning, or ask them to think about the future. Here are a couple of examples:

Relate to the beginning:

*Like that dolphin, we are trapped unless we free ourselves from plastics. The alternatives are there, and they are easy to implement. I ask that we change the canteen policy so that we only use reusable materials, for the sake of our planet, the animals who live here, and ourselves.*

Ask them to think:

*If, as we hear daily in the news, this is a world of change where the nature of work is shifting and changing, what is my future? Is it best served by school grades or by a combination of good grades and real-life experience that enable me to be flexible?*

10

**Chop chop.** Go through your draft and find ways to make it more effective. Does your argument have increasing power, rising from the first reasons to the last? Do your words shape your arguments. Focus on the effect your words have on your audience.

## GOT IT?

You've crafted an argument that considers your audience and purpose, and that leads from an engaging start to a powerful, persuasive finish.

## SO WHAT?

- Planning your argument is the key. Not only will it make your argument more persuasive, it will also clarify your own thinking on the topic.
- Knowing how to structure an argument will help you in work, leadership and school situations, as well as in personal life.

## TRY THIS:

If you feel like you've nailed it but you want to level up, try this:

- Go to one of the channels we've mentioned and check out videos for making two-colour knitting, bobbles or the popcorn stitch!
- Get hooked on crochet – another skill with yarn, and this time with a little hook.
- Can you knit and talk at the same time? Knitting groups all over the world meet up to stitch, chat and swap yarns (pun intended).

## WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- Stand in front of a mirror and practise saying 'no' to someone in your life.
- Choose a person you trust and tell them how you're feeling.
- Write down the possible short- and long-term consequences if you don't resist peer pressure.