Appealing to Audiences

## What is an appeal?

An appeal is a writer/author’s attempt to stimulate a reaction from the reader. The most basic definition of an appeal is “a request,” so a writer is attempting to get something from the reader. This implies that the reader needs or wants something. Appeals speak to our desires, our needs, our interests, our hopes and our dreams.

There are three main types of appeals identified by Aristotle: **pathos**, **ethos** and **logos**.

*Pathos* appeals will speak to our emotional needs.

*Ethos* appeals will speak to ethics, our sense of right and wrong.

*Logos* appeals will speak to what makes sense in our brains through facts and numbers.

**Kairos** is the Greek word for the suitable time and place for making an argument. All three appeals may be used by different kinds of writers in different kinds of writing situations. Some writing situations lend themselves better to different kinds of appeals.

Let’s look at your homework examples from pages 28, 29 and 40-41.

**Academic writers** need specific kinds of appeals because the academic audience has specific expectations, standards and knowledge. However, all three appeals can be used by academic writers…depending on the **rhetorical situation** (topic, assignment, audience and timing). Appeals must always be ethically used in academic writing. Academic writers should never feel the need to “manipulate” the reader because he or she will be confident in the carefully constructed argument that is presented in his or her work.

# Arguments Based on Emotion

**Reading Critically for Pathos**

* We want to be aware that writer’s use pathos. Some use it ethically and others do not. We need to pay attention to the writer’s situation and the appropriateness of the appeal.

**Using Emotions to Build Bridges**

* Using emotion may be appropriate in an academic argument when we need to make a connection with a reader. This is not always the need in an academic argument. Emotional appeals, however, can be important means to building a strong relationship with an audience.

**Using Emotions to Sustain an Argument**

* Emotional appeals can make a claim more memorable. We tend to remember what we have strong feelings about.
* Emotions can be used to provoke an audience to action or response in the reader. Sometimes confrontation is necessary in an argument.
* Some arguments come already packed with emotion. Avoiding emotion in these cases is perhaps impossible. Sometimes it is best to engage the emotions that are already loaded into an argument.
* Some arguments can seem dull to readers. Emotional appeals can enliven a dull argument and captivate reader interest. Emotional appeals can also help create that “bridge” so that audience who mind find a topic dull end up finding some personal interest in that topic.

**Using Humor**

* There are many kinds of ways to use humor. Sarcasm is a confrontational kind of humor. Satire tends be intellectual humor. You must make sure that your rhetorical situation is appropriate when using humorous appeals. Be aware that some readers won’t find you very funny!
* Humor can diffuse tense subjects and help to soften the reader’s suspicions and obstinacy. Humor lightens the mood!
* Having a sense of humor about yourself as a writer is always an asset.

**In Summation**

We want to affect emotion in our readers sometimes, but we don’t want to unethically manipulate.

# Arguments Based on Character

**How Arguments Based on Character Work**

* Arguments based on character depend on TRUST. We tend to accept arguments and writers we trust more readily.
* Why do we trust? Credibility, authority and clear/honest intentions.

**Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility**

* Trustworthiness and credibility are established when a writer is honest, up front, has respect for his/her audience and its values and is likeable.
* Use language that shows your respect for the audience. Use the right level of language for the audience. Emphasize clarity and your desire for the reader to understand.
* Connect your own beliefs to core principles that are well-established and respected by others. Connect to the human who is reading what you’ve written! Assume that you share some values and beliefs.
* Make concessions. Show humility. Admit weakness and faults. Address reader objections and counterarguments. Acknowledge exceptions and qualifications to your argument.
* Be upfront about where you got your research. Cite sources and use them honestly. Don’t take quotes out of context to suit your own purposes.

**Claiming Authority**

* Establish what you know and what makes you qualified to make an argument.
* Make sure you know why the reader should care about your position. Make sure the reader knows too!
* Be specific about your credentials.
* Don’t act as though you know more than you do.

**Clean Motives and Intentions**

* Be up front about your purpose and be clear. Make your intention known and understood.

# Arguments Based on Facts & Reason

**Providing Hard Evidence**

We tend to say that we trust facts more than emotion, but that isn’t necessarily true. Emotion can be a powerful persuader. Facts, stats and numbers are sometimes a more difficult sell because they have to be set up, framed, put in context, explained and analyzed. Some readers find logical evidence rather boring…and boredom can lead to suspicion and criticism.

* Facts: need to be closely related to the points you are making, need to be delivered faithfully, cited correctly, come from a credible source and be representative.
* Statistics: You can lie with numbers and academic readers are suspicious of misused statistics. Be wary of the conclusions drawn from statistics. Often, conclusions coming from such sources can only be tentative. Make sure to make clear where you got the stats, how they were gathered and where they came from.
* Surveys & Polls: People like to present their best selves when they know the results of a poll or survey will be published or used for research; therefore, poll and survey respondents don’t always tell the truth. It is difficult to get accurate results with such measures, but stats can be used for general outcomes and getting a ballpark understanding of an issue or topic.
* Testimonies and Narratives: Eye-witness accounts can be faulty but they can also be useful. We are human beings and our memories are not always accurate. However, a first-hand account of an event or experience can be powerful and convincing.

**Using Reason and Common Sense**

“Hard” facts may not be available when you need to make an argument. In this case, you may have to rely on critical thinking (reason) and common sense.

* Reason: *Deductive thinking* starts with a broad idea and then comes to a specific conclusion. *Inductive thinking* starts with a specific idea and then comes to a broad conclusion. Most academic arguments use deductive analysis.
* Common Sense: Common sense is not as common as you may think. Common sense means sensing what we all can see, hear, feel and know. It is shared understanding. Don’t assume that because you observe or think something (or because an observation is popular or a norm) everyone will agree or share that same observation. Outliers can be right!

**Providing Logical Structures for Argument**

Using strong logic in the thinking behind an argument is very important, but so is the way in which your argument is structured, that is, the way in which your argument is presented to the reader. This is not just the way you organize your paragraphs. Logical structure means that you’ve picked a pattern or plan for your argument that works with your rhetorical situation. Some patterns or plans for argument work better with some topics/assignments/audiences, etc.

Some examples of logical structures:

* Degree: More/less, better/worse, more of good thing/more of bad thing. *To what do degree is this phenomenon good or bad? Is global warming worse today than yesterday?*
* Analogies: Typically complex or extended comparisons that are used to illustrate an otherwise unseen point. *In what way is the current recession like or unlike the Great Depression?*
* Precedent: Also involves a comparison, but precedent will typically survey several previous examples and then compare them with the current topic. *Contemporary television is the ugly stepchild of the Golden Age of Television. Sitcoms in the 1950s(I Love Lucy, Leave it to Beaver, The Honemooners) resemble sitcoms today (Modern Family, How I Met Your Mother, Arrested Development), but also differ.*