

Basic Rhetoric and Writing Strategy

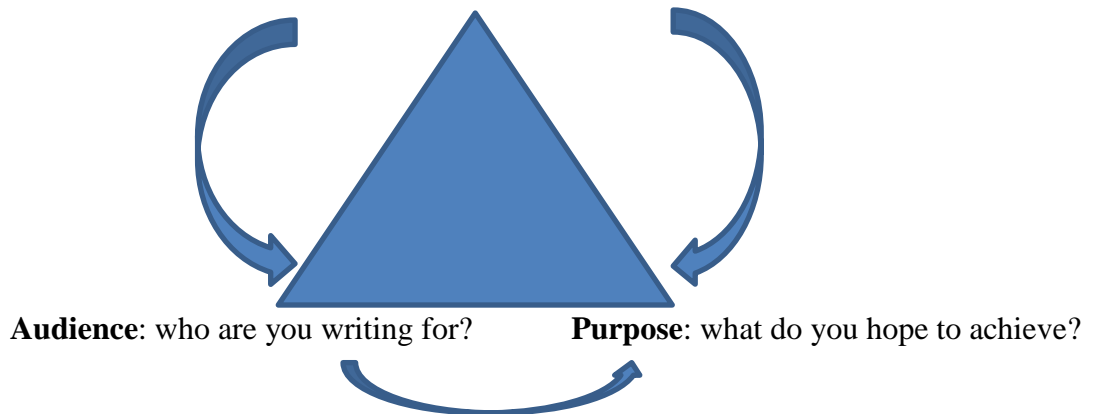
Rhetoric is generally defined as the **art of persuasion**.

While thinkers and scholars have debated the merits of various rhetorical strategies over the past few thousand years, some basic principles have remained constant since the earliest Greek philosophers began studying oration and argumentation.

At the base of all rhetorical theory is the idea that effective arguments must be rational and follow an organizational pattern to create a feeling of consistency for the audience. This outcome is accomplished by framing the argument with two foundational concepts from the planning stage through the presentation of the argument.

The Writing Situation

Writer: what is important to you?



Effective writing begins with recognizing the purpose of the text.

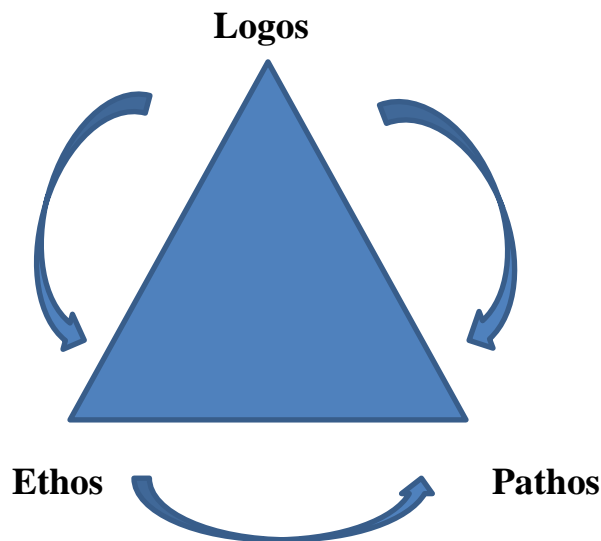
Before you can effectively reach your audience, you need to know what you hope to accomplish and what your audience is capable of hearing/understanding. Each of these pieces relies on the others to create a unified and effective argument. If you ignore any of them, the entire argument suffers. The writing situation is most important during the planning stages of your presentation.

Basic Rhetorical Appeals

In classical rhetoric, there are three basic appeals that are used to persuade the audience:

- **Logos:** appeals based on logic, reason, and order
- **Ethos:** appeals based on credibility, authority, and character
- **Pathos:** appeals based on emotion

The three basic rhetorical appeals must work **together** to build a strong argument



Arguments weak in logos will lack continuity and, therefore, damage the speaker's credibility (ethos). This leads the audience to get bored or confused, which are negative emotional reactions (pathos).

Arguments weak in ethos create a sense of distrust from the audience which, in turn, affects their ability to follow the reason or order of the speech (logos). This also generates a negative emotional reaction (pathos).

Arguments weak in emotion are boring and call the credibility of the speaker into question (ethos). They make it difficult to stay interested which affects the logic of the speech (logos). Arguments too aggressive with emotion are equally as problematic.

All three appeals must work together to best address the audience.

Discourse

Discourse is the way in which we use language differently based upon situation, purpose, and audience. Depending on these factors, speakers will use different terminology, jargon, or slang to connect with the audience and appropriately deliver their presentations.

Misuse of discourse based on audience and situation can be embarrassing for the speaker or confusing for the audience.

The relationship between **the writing situation, the three basic rhetorical appeals, and the use of discourse** is very important to creating and delivering an effective speech, report, or argument. By placing your focus on these basic principles in the design and writing stages, you can build a frame or map for your argument that can be more easily adapted to multiple audiences.