**Chapter No. 10**

**Arguing persuasively**

**How to argue persuasively?**

While many people don't like to sell, most find themselves having to persuade someone at some point. Persuasion is not just for salespeople and their prospects. You may try to persuade [an employee](http://bit.ly/KDEmploy) to perform better, or perhaps you want to persuade [your boss](http://bit.ly/KDBosses) to take on your brilliant idea. Often the most effective persuaders are your kids. Somehow they come by it naturally while you, the adult, has to work hard to find the [persuasive path](http://www.amazon.com/Persuade-People-Dont-Persuaded-ebook/dp/B000SEKLL6/?tag=roarin09-20) to success.

Whatever your persuasive need, here are 7 things that the most persuasive people consistently do:

**1. They Are Purposeful**

Truly persuasive people understand their power and use it sparingly and knowingly.  They understand that most conversations do not require trying to get someone to do or accept something. Aggressive pushers are a turn-off and will put most people on the defensive. It's the person who rarely asks or argues that ultimately gets consideration when they strongly advocate an idea, especially when they do it with power and persistence.  Simply put, they pick their battles. Want to persuade more? Argue and advocate less often.

**2. They Listen ... and Listen ... Then Listen Some More**

People who know how to persuade also know that just pushing your own argument will get you nowhere. They certainly are able to articulate their position in a convincing way, but that is only half the equation. They are actively listening when in persuasion mode. First, they are listening to assess how receptive you are to their point of view. Second, they are listening for your specific objections, which they know they'll have to resolve. Last, they are listening for moments of agreement so they can capitalize. Amazingly persuasive people are constantly listening to you and not themselves.  They already know what they are saying. You can't persuade effectively if you don't know the other side of the argument.

**3. They Create a Connection**

It's easy to dismiss people who are trying to persuade you if you have no emotional stake in them or their argument. Really persuasive people know this, so they will be likeable and look for common ground to help establish emotional bonds and shared objectives. [They show empathy](http://www.amazon.com/Roar-Heard-Sales-Marketing-Jungle/dp/0470598794/?tag=roarin09-20) for your position and make it known that they are on your side. They manage their impatience and wait for you to give them permission to advocate their approach. You'll persuade people much more easily if they are open and aligned with your desires.

**4. They Acknowledge Credibility**

Really persuasive people understand that there is no sense wasting time arguing facts. Most of the world does not function in black and white. They value strong opinions and will make sure that you are entitled to yours. In fact, they will make sure they give you full credit for every argument of yours that has some validity. This makes it harder for you to fully dismiss their point of view. When you are persuading people, reinforce their credibility on facts and opinions rather than dismissing them outright. Then they'll be more likely to [pay you equal respect](http://bit.ly/1406tfL) in the exchange and be more open to the merits of your opposing view.

**5. They Offer Satisfaction**

[Smart persuaders](http://bit.ly/QGSFUr) know that they don't have to win every little battle to win the war. They are more than willing to sacrifice when it helps the overall cause. They are ready to find the easiest path to yes. Often that is simply to give you what you want whenever possible. In my old lending days, we would often deal with busy underwriters who asked for items we knew they already had. Instead of arguing the point, we would just resend the documents and save our energy for issues that were not so easily resolved. Give ground where you can and hold your ground only where it matters. Choose [being successful](http://bit.ly/1083Cg7) over being right.

**6. They Know When to Shut Up**

Successful persuaders get that you don't win the battle by constantly berating people with an unending verbal barrage. Wearing people down is not an effective strategy. They carefully support their arguments and check in with questions that will help to close the conversation. Then they step back. The great sales trainer [Tom Hopkins](http://www.amazon.com/Selling-For-Dummies-Tom-Hopkins/dp/0470930667/?tag=roarin09-20) still today teaches these decades-old techniques of his mentor J. Douglas Edwards. His most important lesson is "Whenever you ask a closing question, shut up. The first person, who speaks, loses."

**7. They Know When to Back Away**

Urgency and immediacy are often the enemies of real persuasion. It's possible to close a less significant sale through urgency, but deep ideas [require time and thought](http://bit.ly/kdimpatience) to take root. Great persuaders bring you along in your own time. And they give you the space and time to carefully consider their position. They know that nothing is more powerful than your persuading yourself on their behalf. That almost never occurs in the presence of the persuader. The next time you want to persuade someone of something truly important, follow the tips above, make your case, and walk away. If they don't come around, you were probably wasting your effort in the first place.

**Recognizing an Issue**

*The goal of argument is to bring about a change in an audience's initial position on a controversial issue. Depending on the situation and audience, at times this goal is achieved by an arguer who presents a claim along with reasons and evidence to convince an audience to agree with the position taken; at other times, arguers create the possibility of agreement by acknowledging different points of view and working to identify one view or a combination of views that are acceptable to most or all audience members.* Both types of argument are taught in this book.

The basic method that argument of both types employs can be described as making a claim (expressing a point of view on an issue that is communicated by the arguer) and supporting it with reasons and evidence to convince an audience to change the way it thinks about the issue. All forms of productive argument include these components.

When composing an argumentative essay, it is not enough that we present a valid, sound argument in favor of our thesis. We also need to compose a counter-argument showing why the opposition's reasoning and arguments are unsound and invalid. The counter-argument requires us to systematically examine and analyze the opposing premises, inferences, and conclusions, explaining the inconsistencies and errors we find as we analyze. The counter-argument is a crucial step that the writer must take to convince a reader that his/her point of view on an issue is the best point of view.

**Developing Your Stance**

When you develop your argument, you are confirming your own position, building your case. Use empirical evidence—facts and statistics—to support your claims. Appeal to your audience’s rational and logical thinking. Argue your case from the authority of your evidence and research.

Your list of strengths and weaknesses can help you develop your argument. Prioritize the strengths and weaknesses of each position and then decide on the top three to five strengths and weaknesses. Then, using a technique for developing content ideas (e.g., clustering, association, or journalist’s questions [see the section in chapter 2 titled “[Techniques to Get Started](https://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter/onlineguide/tutorial/chapter2/ch2-05.html)”] ), begin to expand your understanding of each item on your list. Evaluate each one in terms of how you can support it—by reasoning, providing details, adding an example, or offering evidence. Again, prioritize your list of strengths and weaknesses, this time noting the supporting comments that need more work, call for more evidence, or may be irrelevant to your argument. At this stage, it is better to overlook nothing and keep extensive notes for later reference.

As you develop your ideas, remember that you are presenting them in a fair-minded and rational way, counting on your readers’ intelligence, experience, and insight to evaluate your argument and see your point of view.

**Creating an argumentative thesis**

Although the phrase "argumentative thesis statement" sounds a bit frightening, you don't have to be scared. A thesis statement is actually just a one-sentence summary of the main point of your paper, and most instructors require it because it can actually help you write your paper, not to mention making the final product a whole lot easier to follow. The thesis statement begins with a topic--what you are writing about--and an arguable claim, or the argument you are trying to make. If you were trying to argue against required gym credits in college, for example, your thesis might start off a little like this: "Gym classes are an unnecessary part of a college education."

In this example, the topic is "gym classes"--after all, this is what you are writing about--and the claim is that they "are an unnecessary part of a college education." Now, before you start thinking that this argumentative thesis thing is actually very easy, so easy that your 10-year-old brother could do it, and scamper off to pound out your paper in 15 minutes, take a moment to consider the idea of "argumentative claim" again. The claim in the example above is argumentative because there is more than one acceptable answer.   
  
In other words, people could argue this claim--they could stage a debate, and it would be interesting not ridiculous. Some people might say that we need gym classes because they help students develop healthy exercise habits; some may say they are a waste of money and college students are adults responsible for their own health; still others might say gym classes are unnecessary the way they are currently taught, and if we got better teachers, they would be an important part of the college experience.   
  
Now, think about whether the same kind of argument could be applied if your claim was that the Civil War was fought from 1861-1865, or that the sky is blue, or that taking candy from a baby is unethical. Probably not much to argue, right! and this is where the difficulty of the argumentative thesis comes in--you have to have a real, debatable claim to write a good argumentative thesis, something people could honestly debate over.   
  
This means you want to stay away from writing arguments about facts--unless your argument is that some previously accepted fact is wrong--and ethical issues that are so obvious that they would be difficult to debate. That doesn't mean you can't write ethical arguments, since some of the best debates involve them, but you should make sure the issue is actually arguable. For example, "Murder is wrong," is not exactly arguable, but "Abortion is murder" and "Capital punishment is murder" are.  
  
Finally, you need one more component after your argumentative claim to make an argumentative thesis statement: support. Perhaps you have heard of this part of the thesis referred to as the "because" statement. The support section of your argumentative thesis is where you list why you believe your claim to be true. This sections both helps you build your credibility (what we stodgy, professedly types like to call your appeal to ethos) in the first paragraph of your paper and set up an easy-to-follow organization, as you will (or at least should) use your thesis statement as an outline of your paper's organization.   
  
For example, if your thesis statement is "Gym classes are an unnecessary part of a college education because they cover material already learned in most high schools and take time away from academic study," the "support" section of your thesis would begin with the word "because." By looking at this thesis statement, the reader would have a good idea of not only what arguments will be made in the paper, but in what order they will be made--you will discuss the high school argument before the academic study one. Thus, your reader is familiar with your organization, and there are no surprises, which mean she is going to find it easier to understand and, hopefully, accept.   
  
An argumentative thesis statement, then, is composed of three parts--a topic, an arguable claim, and a support section. While it's not so easy that your 10-year-old brother writes these things for fun, it's also not too difficult, and once you have one in place, you'll probably find the rest of the writing process much easier--just don't forget to change your thesis if you change your argument halfway through your paper.

**Developing reasons and evidence**

**Reasons**

Clear thinking requires that you state your claim and support it with concrete, specific facts. This approach appeals to our common sense and rational thinking. Formal reasoning involves following certain established logical methods to arrive at certain pieces of information or conclusions. Generally, these logical methods are known as inductive reasoning and  deductive reasoning.

When our logical thinking states specific facts (called premises) and then draws a conclusion, or generalization, we call this inductive thinking. **Inductive reasoning**enables us to examine the specific details in light of how well they add up to the generalization. When we think inductively, we are asking whether the evidence clearly supports the conclusions.

**Example of Inductive Reasoning**

Our marketing study proves that citizens are concerned about information privacy and won’t visit certain websites.

In **deductive reasoning,** our logical thinking starts with the generalization. As we apply our generalization to a specific situation, we examine the individual premises that make that generalization reasonable or unreasonable. When our logical thinking starts with the generalization, or conclusion, we may then apply the generalization to a particular situation to see whether that generalization follows from the premises. Our deductive thinking can be expressed as a [syllogism](https://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter/onlineguide/tutorial/glossary/gloss.html#syllogism) or an [enthymeme](https://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter/onlineguide/tutorial/glossary/gloss.html#enthymeme)—a shortened form of the syllogism.

**Example of Deductive Reasoning**

**Syllogism (Long Form)**

Aggressive marketers speak of invasive data collection as simply “getting to know the customer,” and ABC Corporation is actively assembling a database of private client information. Despite their claim to be interested in providing better customer service, we may be concerned that ABC will not protect our privacy.

**Enthymeme**

Because ABC Corporation is assembling a database of private information about their clients, their customers are concerned about identity theft.

**Evidence**

Do not stop with having a point. You have to back up your point with evidence. The strength of your evidence, and your use of it, can make or break your argument. See our [handout on evidence](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/evidence/). You already have the natural inclination for this type of thinking, if not in an academic setting. Think about how you talked your parents into letting you borrow the family car. Did you present them with lots of instances of your past trustworthiness? Did you make them feel guilty because your friends’ parents all let them drive? Did you whine until they just wanted you to shut up? Did you look up statistics on teen driving and use them to show how you didn’t fit the dangerous-driver profile? These are all types of argumentation, and they exist in academia in similar forms.

Every field has slightly different requirements for acceptable evidence, so familiarize yourself with some arguments from within that field instead of just applying whatever evidence you like best. Pay attention to your textbooks and your instructor’s lectures. What types of argument and evidence are they using? The type of evidence that sways an English instructor may not work to convince a sociology instructor. Find out what counts as proof that something is true in that field. Is it statistics, a logical development of points, something from the object being discussed (art work, text, culture, or atom), the way something works, or some combination of more than one of these things?

Be consistent with your evidence. Unlike negotiating for the use of your parents’ car, a college paper is not the place for an all-out blitz of every type of argument. You can often use more than one type of evidence within a paper, but make sure that within each section you are providing the reader with evidence appropriate to each claim. So, if you start a paragraph or section with a statement like “Putting the student seating area closer to the basketball court will raise player performance,” do not follow with your evidence on how much more money the university could raise by letting more students go to games for free. Information about how fan support raises player morale, which then results in better play, would be a better follow-up. Your next section could offer clear reasons why undergraduates have as much or more right to attend an undergraduate event as wealthy alumni—but this information would not go in the same section as the fan support stuff. You cannot convince a confused person, so keep things tidy and ordered.

**Acknowledging Other Perspectives**

Teenagers – well, most people, actually – are famous for being narrow-minded and self-centered when it comes to arguing. Most people just want their opinions heard, and they don’t care what anyone else thinks about the situation. It’s their way or the highway. Their arguments just become egotistical rants about what they think, what they know, and what they want. “Me, me me!”

These rants, however, are hardly ever convincing. The truth is that even if that person might have a good idea or valid perspective, their failure to show their awareness of other points of view is a big weakness. The more an individual can show how much they understand of everyone’s viewpoint, the more likely that individual will be able to show how their particular perspective is the best.

***So how do I show that I know other’s perspectives?***

The first thing you should take into consideration is the different people who are involved in the argument. The second thing you should consider is the different opinions on the issue those people will have. The best way to do this is to think about these possibilities even before you for your own opinion. Let’s try it out with the following sample.

It is important to regularly take yourself through this exercise of examining others’ opinion, for this essay and for real life situations. To practice this kind of thinking more, refer to the Prompt Analysis page that gives you multiple steps to work through. The more you practice this kind of thinking, the more naturally you’ll be able to apply it in the Writing.

It’s much easier than you might imagine! You do NOT have to build entire arguments or paragraphs around what someone else thinks. Instead, all you have to is include someone else’s perspective right before you share your own point. You can do this in the thesis, paragraph topic sentences, and body paragraph explanations. Really, can you include it anywhere? Just follow this simple formula:

**Although \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ might think \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, really \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is true because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

This simple type of phrasing makes your arguments automatically more complex, since it is constantly putting it in context of what others might think and boom, suddenly you sound like a deep, unique thinker and not a ranting teenager.

**Arguing logically**

When people say "Let's be logical" about a given situation or problem, they usually mean "Let's follow these steps:"

**1. Figure out what we know to be true.**

**2. Spend some time thinking about it.**

**3. Determine the best course of action.**

In logical terms, this three-step process involves building a *logical argument*. An argument contains a set of premises at the beginning and a conclusion at the end. In many cases, the premises and the conclusion will be linked by a series of intermediate steps. In the following sections, these steps are discussed in the order that you're likely to encounter them.

**Generating premises**

The *premises* are the facts of the matter: The statements that you know (or strongly believe) to be true. In many situations, writing down a set of premises is a great first step to problem solving.

For example, suppose you're a school board member trying to decide whether to endorse the construction of a new school that would open in September. Everyone is very excited about the project, but you make some phone calls and piece together your facts, or premises.

**Premises:**

* The funds for the project won't be available until March.
* The construction company won't begin work until they receive payment.
* The entire project will take at least eight months to complete.

So far, you only have a set of premises. But when you put them together, you're closer to the final product — your logical argument. In the next section, you'll discover how to combine the premises together.

**Bridging the gap with intermediate steps**

Sometimes an argument is just a set of premises followed by a conclusion. In many cases, however, an argument also includes *intermediate steps* that show how the premises lead incrementally to that conclusion.

Using the school construction example from the previous section, you may want to spell things out like this:

*According to the premises, we won't be able to pay the construction company until March, so they won't be done until at least eight months later, which is November. But, school begins in September. Therefore. . .*

The word *therefore* indicates a conclusion and is the beginning of the final step.

**Forming a conclusion**

The conclusion is the outcome of your argument. If you've written the intermediate steps in a clear progression, the conclusion should be fairly obvious. For the school construction example, here it is:

**Conclusion:**

*The building won't be complete before school begins.*

If the conclusion isn't obvious or doesn't make sense, something may be wrong with your argument. In some cases, an argument may not be valid. In others, you may have missing premises that you'll need to add.

**Deciding if the argument is valid**

After you've built an argument, you need to be able to decide if it's *valid*, which is to say if it's a good argument.

To test an argument's validity, assume that all of the premises are true and then see if the conclusion follows automatically from them. If the conclusion automatically follows, you know it's a valid argument. If not, the argument is *invalid*.

**Understanding enthymemes**

The school construction example argument may seem valid, but you also may have a few doubts. For example, if another source of funding became available, the construction company may start earlier and perhaps finish by September. Thus, the argument has a hidden premise called an *enthymeme*.

*There is no other source of funds for the project.*

Logical arguments about real-world situations (in contrast to mathematical or scientific arguments) almost always have enthymemes. So, the clearer you become about the enthymemes hidden in an argument, the better chance you have of making sure your argument is valid.

**Writing a Position Paper**

The purpose of a position paper is to generate support on an issue. It describes a position on an issue and the rational for that position. The position paper is based on facts that provide a solid foundation for your argument. 1 In the position paper you should:

• Use evidence to support your position, such as statistical evidence or dates and events.

• Validate your position with authoritative references or primary source quotations.

• Examine the strengths and weaknesses of your position.

• Evaluate possible solutions and suggest courses of action.

Choose an issue where there is a clear division of opinion and which is arguable with facts and inductive reasoning. You may choose an issue on which you have already formed an opinion. However, in writing about this issue you must examine your opinion of the issue critically. Prior to writing your position paper, define and limit your issue carefully. Social issues are complex with multiple solutions. Narrow the topic of your position paper to something that is manageable. Research your issue thoroughly, consulting experts and obtaining primary documents. Consider feasibility, cost-effectiveness and political/social climate when evaluating possible solutions and courses of action. The following structure is typical of a position paper:

• An introduction

• Identification of the issue

• Statement of the position

• The body

• Background information

• Supporting evidence or facts

• A discussion of both sides of the issue

• A conclusion

• Suggested courses of action

• Possible solutions

The **introduction** should clearly identify the issue and state the author’s position. It should be written in a way that catches the reader’s attention.

The **body** of the position paper may contain several paragraphs. Each paragraph should present an idea or main concept that clarifies a portion of the position statement and is supported by evidence or facts. Evidence can be primary source quotations, statistical data, interviews with experts, and indisputable dates or events. Evidence should lead, through inductive reasoning, to the main concept or idea presented in the paragraph. The body may begin with some background information and should incorporate a discussion of both sides of the issue.

The **conclusion** should summarize the main concepts and ideas and reinforce, without repeating, the introduction or body of the paper. It could include suggested courses of action and possible solutions.