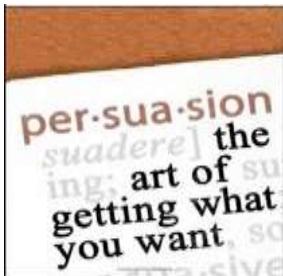


# A Guide To Persuasive Writing



## Before you get started

Below is the success criteria from the National Qualifications course outline so ultimately this is what you need to produce:

Persuasive writing will persuade to a purpose or point of view (for example, to sell a product, or influence opinion/belief), usually concerning itself with a single topic or issue.

The main requirements of the **persuasive** essay are that it will:

- carry a clear sense of conviction or inducement; tone may range from encouragement through cajoling to pressurising
- make an effective use of a number of persuasive techniques, such as manipulating information, claiming necessity/exclusivity, flattering, employing technical jargon/rhetoric.



## Choosing a Topic

### **Banned List - Do Not Choose These!**

- **Abortion**
- **Assisted Suicide**
- **Celebrity Role Models**
- **Footballers' Wages**
- **Capital Punishment**
- **Size 0 Models**
- **Cosmetic Surgery**

### **Possible Persuasive Titles:**

#### Health

Lack of sleep is bad for your health  
Exercise will help you live longer



#### Education

The school day should start later to accommodate the needs of teenagers  
Computer games are better than books for learning  
Books are better than kindles

#### Gender bias

Women are treated harsher than men in the criminal justice system  
Women are treated more leniently by the criminal justice system  
Men are treated harsher than women in the criminal justice system

#### Sport

Fishing is good for your health  
Scotland should invest in sport centres and swimming pools

#### Environment

Wind power is the way forward  
Allotments help communities grow

Topics from:

<http://www.englishforums.com/English/FreeDiscussionsTopicsDebated/vkzq/post.htm>

The husband should bring most of the money in the family.

Women are less intelligent than men.

Banks are not necessary.

Football is for idiots.

Computers are very important in education.

The school system is not effective enough.

Success in life means money.

Nationalism is a positive thing.

Talk shows on TV are useless and boring.

Husbands and wives should have the same educational level to make it work.

Friendship is the most important relationship in life.

Money management should be taught in last two years of high school.

Doing a job that you like is more important than the amount of money you earn.

War is always a waste of time.

Living alone can be an advantageous.

The church is a positive factor in our society.

Democracy has bad aspects too.

Camping holidays are better than hotels.

Capitalism is not a fair society

Vaccinations are a waste of time.

Women are not equal to men in our society. .

Parents are too permissive with their children nowadays.

Vicious and dangerous sports should be banned.

Compulsory military service should be abolished everywhere.

Childhood is the happiest time of your life.

Living in a large, modern city- only a madman would choose it.

No one wants to live to be a hundred.

Equality of opportunities in society is only a dream.

People should not spend billions on exploring Outer Space.

The most important of all human qualities is a sense of humour.

It's foolish to give money to beggars.



Men are worse gossips than women.  
Animals should not be kept in captivity.  
Society should do away with paper altogether.  
Life begins at forty.  
Wearing a Poppy is no longer respectful.  
Vegetarianism is the only way.  
Religion has nothing to do with modern life.  
Machines can replace teachers.  
The customer is always right.  
Fracking is a positive thing.  
Foodbanks are a waste of time.



## **Researching your Persuasive piece**

You need to research to ensure your essay has enough in it.

You can research in the following ways -

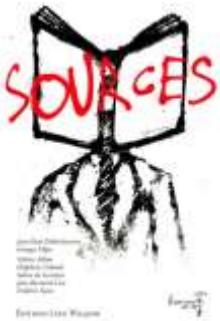


1. Articles in quality newspapers. Insert key words into the paper's website.
2. Articles from magazines, trade publications and journals are also available from <http://findarticles.com>
3. Your school or local library will have collections on controversial topics like child labour etc.
4. Essays/extracts from literary/scientific/medical texts.
5. Carefully selected websites.

Ensure that the information is as up-to-date as possible!

Make sure too that you note down all your sources as you need to record these in your essay.





## List of Sources

You need to make sure that your sources appear in the bibliography in alphabetical order according to the surname of the author. You should set out the information by giving the author's name, then, give the date of the publication, next, the name of the publication (in italics), then, the place of the publication and finally, the name of the publisher.

It should look something like this -

### **Books**

King, R. (2000) *Brunelleschi's Dome*. London: Penguin.



### **Newspapers and magazines**

Goring, R. (2003, January 4) *She's Talking Our Language Now*. The Herald, p.14.

### **Reference works with no named author**

Chambers Biographical Dictionary. (1984). Edinburgh: Chambers.

### **Government/organisation report**

Department for Education and Employment. (2001). *Schools: Building on Success*. London: The Stationery Office.

### **Electronically sourced material**

Name and title of article/publication as you would for a print publication, but instead of the place of publication and the name of the publisher, put the web address, the date the text was posted (if available) and the date you accessed it.

Dewey, R. A. *Psych Web*. <http://www.psywww.com/> (2002). Retrieved January 25, 2003.

## Using sources properly

Your persuasive piece will involve combining information from published sources into your own writing in order to add credibility and authority to what you are saying. However, when building on the work of others, you need to be careful not to **plagiarise**: "to steal and pass off (the ideas and words of another) as one's own" or to "present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source." These materials will help you avoid plagiarism by teaching you how to properly integrate information from published sources into your own writing.

You can use sources in **two ways – paraphrasing and using a direct quote**.

### **How to paraphrase a source (put into your own words)**

1. When reading a passage, try first to understand it as a whole, rather than pausing to write down specific ideas or phrases.
2. Be selective. Choose and summarise the material that helps you make a point in your essay.
3. Think of what "your own words" would be if you were telling someone who's unfamiliar with your subject (your mother, your brother, a friend) what the original source said.
4. Remember you don't need to change or put quotation marks around shared language (words that don't have an alternative!)

### **Methods of Paraphrasing**

#### **a) Look away from the source then write**

Read the text you want to paraphrase several times until you feel that you understand it and can use your own words to restate it to someone else. Then, look away from the original and rewrite the text in your own words.

#### **b) Take notes**

Take abbreviated notes; set the notes aside; then paraphrase from the notes a day or so later, or when you draft.

### **Using a direct quotation**

One of your jobs as a writer is to guide your reader through your text. Don't simply drop quotations into your paper and leave it to the reader to make connections.

Integrating a quotation into your text usually involves three elements:

- A **signal** that a quotation is coming--generally the author's name and/or a reference to the work
- The **quote** itself
- A **comment** that shows why you have included the quote – what does it reinforce about your argument? How does it strengthen your paragraph? **You must always comment on your quote!**

## **Basic Structure of a Persuasive Essay**

In a persuasive essay, you are setting out to persuade readers to back the case you are putting forward from the very start.

An effective structure may look like this -



- Introduction making stance clear
- Acknowledgement yet rejection of a counter argument
- First persuasive paragraph
- Subsequent persuasive paragraphs (finishing with your strongest argument)
- Conclusion

### **Introductions**

#### **An increase too far: why university fees should not rise**



In the heady days of post-war Britain, a fairer nation in terms of health care and education seemed not just possible but inevitable. Free university tuition, backed by local authority maintenance grants, was a central feature of the Labour government's education policy. At last, able young people from underprivileged backgrounds, cheated for generations of the chance to better themselves academically, could develop their talents in a way denied to their parents. For decades, tens of thousands of young people passed through Britain's universities, enriching immeasurably the ranks of public service and private enterprise. In 1998, however, at a stroke, another Labour government introduced tuition fees of £1000 and replaced the grant system with student loans. Today, fees stand at around £3000 and the average student leaves university with crippling debts of around £22000. Now, there is talk of fees rising to £5000 a year. Can this be fair? Let us look at why this rise is unacceptable and what can be done to halt the growth of this intolerable burden.

#### **Task 1:**

Annotate this introduction by highlighting the persuasive techniques the writer has used and explaining their effect.

### **Task 2:**

Using material from the above introduction on university fees and any of the following information which you think you may need, write the introduction to a persuasive essay in which you take the *opposite* point of view from the persuasive essay introduction above.

- Universities across the country, according to a Guardian report, are preparing to axe thousands of teaching jobs, close campuses and drop courses to cope with government funding cuts amounting to at least £950 million over the next three years. More reliance needs, therefore, to be placed on tuition fees.
- Professor Paul Wellings, vice-chancellor of Lancaster University, recently told a conference on higher education funding that charging higher fees was the only viable way to boost university finances.
- Some in government circles think that tuition fees should be doubled to fund an expansion of bursaries for poorer students.

## **HIGHER FOLIO WRITING - TECHNIQUES OF PERSUASION**

The following can be seen as a fairly comprehensive list of persuasive techniques. Obviously, no single piece will use all these techniques, but a generous selection will ensure that your tone and purpose remain persuasive.

### **Personalise**

It is essential that your reader feels that what you are writing about is an important topic for them. If they feel it has nothing to do with them then they may not care about it and they won't get persuaded.

Therefore you must make it real and personal to the people reading.  
For example:

- *While global warming may not directly effect people on the planet right now it will have a disastrous effect on those born in the future. Sadly, this may include your children or grandchildren. This is why we must act now to help save our future loved ones.*

### **Repetition**

When we repeat ourselves we emphasise something we feel strongly about. This is why it is such an effective tool in persuasive writing.

For example:

- “It is **terrible** that we still force people to suffer when an escape is possible, it is **terrible** that we force families to endure the pain of watching loved ones suffer and it is **terrible** that Britain, as a society, does not do more to relieve the agony that many terminally ill patients must face.”

## List

A list can be used effectively in persuasive writing as it emphasises that a variety of things have been used or have been affected by something.

For example:

- We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and we shall never surrender.*

This quote, from Winston Churchill, emphasises that he is willing to fight anywhere to win the war. He is persuading British people to fight for their country and not give in – no matter where they have to do it.

In general when creating a list you should only include 3 items.

- “Good parents are important because they’re the ones who feed us, who wipe our tears, who hold our hands when we need it.”
- “It is important that we admit to the poverty, poor housing and addiction that is rife in our community before we can improve.”

## Use of rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions make the reader think about your topic and if you structure them correctly you ensure that they can only answer in a way which agrees with you.

For example

- Would you allow a member of your to starve every night simply because they could not work and needed benefits?*

Very few people would argue that they would be happy with the above scenario. By asking this question you have edged your reader a bit further to your side. Rhetorical questions are also a good way to personalise your argument!

Think about the following questions. If a teacher said them would you answer ‘no’?

- Can we improve the quality of our work?
- Do you want to leave school with no qualifications?

What about this one. Could you answer ‘no’ to this?

- Do you believe it is right that thousands of people starve to death every day in Britain?

## **Common rhetorical question mistakes**

Do not overuse rhetorical questions. Keep them to a minimum as you want to ensure you are giving your reader some information and details rather than asking them to do all the work.

Do not ask a rhetorical question then ignore the answer. Only include if you are addressing the point your question makes.

Do not start or end every paragraph with rhetorical questions

## **Stating facts or statistics**

This is a great way to get information across to your reader.

Make sure that your numbers are reliable and back up your point.

For example

- UK house prices rose by a fantastic 9.1% on average over the past year, according to the latest research from the Office for National Statistics. This shows the house market is improving.
- Remember that figures can be ‘manipulated’ to help your argument. Only choose the ones which back up what you are saying.

## **More examples:**

- “We took a survey in school and 18 out of 22 people want less homework.”
- “It has been shown that afterschool study classes only improve grades by 3% so you have to ask: is it really worth the extortionate cost?”
- “An example of McDonalds continued hold on the fast food market is the fact that it’s daily customer traffic (62 million) is more than the population of Great Britain!”

## **Using powerful images**

Shock your reader into agreeing with you by describing a realistic scene (using creative skills).

When an advert or charity tries to persuade you to buy something or donate money they often include a strong image.

However, since you are being asked to persuade people through writing you cannot simply include a picture. You must do it in words.

- “I found out she had been sitting alone for 32 hours now. No one had visited her and no one had shown any interest in her. Her wallpaper was peeling from the walls as if it had given up hope of staying upright. My gran’s back was stooped similar to the wallpaper and her legs were devoid of power so she could not stand. Carers were supposed to visit 4 times a day but, due to financial cutbacks, she had been left. No food nourished her, no heating warmed her and no voice comforted her. She had been abandoned by those who were supposed to care.”

## **Making the listener/reader feel guilty**

Remember that your reader is a human being and will overall be a good person who wants the best for society.

Remind them of what will happen if they do not follow your example and agree with your view on the topic.

For example:

- “How can we sit here doing nothing in Britain, with our big screen TVs, Iphones and our high speed internet while people in other countries struggle to survive on the miniscule food they have?”
- “Next time you put on your Nike trainers remember that just a few weeks ago a 9-14 year old child in Indonesia was sewing them for 90 cents an hour.”

### **Flattering/buttering up the reader**

Everyone likes to feel like they are intelligent, kind and willing to do the correct thing. Therefore another good strategy is praise.

If you flatter your reader they will be more likely to agree with you.

For example:

- “Britain did a fantastic job of promoting female empowerment after WWII and I call on everyone to show that brilliant spirit again to help women reach the top in modern sport.”

More examples:

- “It is obvious to any rational person that we need to ensure children stay on at school to improve their grades.”
- “No truly caring parent would leave their child alone in the supermarket in this day and age but sadly some people still do.”

### **Another piece of advice**

#### **Remember your audience:**

- you are not writing to persuade extreme opponents (they are probably a lost cause);
- you are not writing for people who already support your point of view completely;
- you ARE writing for those who are either floating voters or who are faint-hearted: your task is to bring them on board
- it is useful to identify in your mind someone from the class whom you feel that you could actually persuade and write as you would for that person.

## **STRUCTURE:**

Your essay must grapple with the opposing point of view as well as your own:

- the other side must be reasonably fairly represented
- the strength of their position must be acknowledged
- you must counter the opposing point of view, not just dismiss it

You can do this either by detailing the opposition in one section and opposing it in the other sections; or you can counter an important opposition argument in each section. However, the essay is not about the opposition's point of view: it is about the positive aspects of your own.

## **Rejection of a counter argument**

### **Counter-Argument**

When you write a persuasive essay, you make an argument and offer some reasoning, using evidence which suggests why the argument is true.

When you counter-argue, you consider a possible argument *against* your own viewpoint and then state why your claim is still valid.

Arguing against someone's objection to your claim is called *counter-argument*.

Countering the argument against your claim allows you to anticipate doubts and counter-objections that a reader might have; it presents you as the kind of person who weighs alternatives before arguing for one, who considers other points of view instead of sweeping them under the rug, and who is more interested in discovering the truth than winning a point.

### **Including at least one opposite view to your own claim should occur in your persuasive essay.**

Counter-argument in an essay has **two** stages:

- 1) you turn against your argument to challenge it and then
- 2) you turn back to re-affirm it.



## **The Turn Against**

You first imagine a reader, who doesn't share your opinion, or cite a real person, who might resist your argument by pointing out:

- a problem with your reasoning, different conclusion could be drawn from the same facts;
- one or more disadvantages or practical drawbacks to what you propose;
- an alternative proposal that makes more sense than yours.

You introduce this **turn against** with a phrase like *Someone might object here that...* or *It might seem that...* or *It's true that...* or *Admittedly...* or *Of course...* or with an anticipated challenging question: *But how...?* or *But why...?* or *But isn't this just...?* or *But if this is so, what about...?*

Then you state the case against yourself as briefly and clearly as you can, pointing to evidence where possible.

## **The Turn Back**

Your return to your own argument is called the **turn back**. You announce the *turn back* with one of the following: *but*, *yet*, *however*, *nevertheless* or *still*.

In reasoning about the proposed counter-argument, you may:

- show why it is not a real problem
- acknowledge its validity, but suggest why it's less important than what you propose
- agree to the opposing argument and then restate your own in a more exact, qualified way that takes into account the objection.

**Example:** "True, gun control legislation in Canada needs to be tightened to prevent the United States from becoming as violent as its neighbours to the south. The proposal that has been submitted, however, does not go far enough. Instead,...[now writer begins building their side of argument, showing how it is stronger than the opposing sides!]

## Where to Put a Counter-Argument

Counter-argument can appear **anywhere** in the essay, but it most commonly appears

- as a section or paragraph just after your introduction, in which you lay out the expected reaction or standard position before turning away to develop your own;
- as a quick move within any body paragraph, where you imagine a counter-argument not to your main idea but to the point that the specific paragraph is arguing or is about to argue



## Persuasive essay main body - SEEC

To write each persuasive paragraph you should follow the following pattern:



**Statement** – Here you set out the main point you wish to make in the paragraph that follows. Some people refer to this as their topic sentence, but remember your statement may require more than one sentence to express fully the topic to be discussed. It should be a fairly broad, general remark, with no detail given here.

Example – In recent years France has proved to be a leader in tackling the problem of child obesity. Research at the University of Grenoble suggests that there has been a reduction in cases being seen by family doctors.

**Evidence** – Evidence can take multiple forms: it may come from statistics, information in a newspaper or journal article, comments by well-known experts in the subject, surveys, polls, an illustrative anecdote, personal experience. This section can usually be distinguished by the appearance of detailed information, quotations from a text or statistics.

Example: According to Professor Gerard Dalle writing in...

**Explanation**- This is where you help the reader understand the implications of the evidence which you have just produced.

Example: From statistics such as these, it is clear...

Should you wish to rebut or question certain evidence, this is where you would do so.

**Comment** – Here you sum up the significance/implications of the information gleaned from the paragraph, perhaps including a link to the next paragraph if at all possible.

Example: But while the problem of child obesity may be tackled systematically in certain forward-thinking countries in Europe, there is no similar approach being developed in Scotland at the moment.

## **Task**

Here is an SEEC body paragraph for a persuasive essay dealing with the environmental benefits of wind power. The SEEC sequence has been deliberately confused. Determine the correct order of the paragraphs and then describe what features of them helped you decide whether they were a **statement** or **evidence** or an **explanation** or a **comment**.

1. So who could be against such an approach to power generation? Here is a method which is kind not just to the land but the air above it too, one which is sourced from a supply that is endless, a fact which makes it equally attractive from another point of view, the economic one.
2. Key among the various advantages which wind power brings is its beneficial effect on our environment. By more widespread use of it, we could prove ourselves to be much better carers of our planet.
3. From facts and figures such as these it is clear that with the application of wind power we are in a favourable position to take much greater care of our already seriously damaged planet, victim of many years of indiscriminate use of polluting fossil fuels. And while not to every taste, wind turbines disturb the landscape far less than dams, coal mines and nuclear power plants with all their invasive satellite roads and buildings.
4. For a start, the construction and installation of a wind farm leaves a far smaller footprint than do other more polluting means of generating electricity. According to the respected National Renewable Energy Laboratory of America, wind turbines, equipment and access roads can take up a fairly insignificant 5% of the wind farm site, leaving the rest free for existing farm usage. Furthermore, the reduction in noxious, global-warming CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could be drastically reduced. Figures produced by General Electric suggest that in the course of a 20-year lifespan, a 100 MW wind farm has the capacity to generate the same amount of electricity as burning 2.9 million tons of coal or over 62 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

## **Persuasive essay main body - Linkage**

It is important for your persuasive essay to flow smoothly. Throughout, there should be logical, easy-to-follow ‘signposting’ to ease your reader through the essay.

Here are just some of the connectives and connecting phrases which will help you make your essay more fluent.

### **Listing (to list stages in an argument in order)**

First(ly)...                      Furthermore...                      Finally...

To begin with...                Secondly...                      In conclusion...

                                        In addition...

                                        What is more...



#### **Note:**

First and foremost...

First and most importantly...

(These both mark the beginning of a descending order.)

Above all...

Last but not least...

(These both mark the end of an ascending order.)

### **Transition (to lead the reader to a new stage of thought)**

Now,...

As far as...is concerned...

Turning to...

Regarding the question of...

As for...

### **Contrast (with previous comment)**

(On the one hand)...On the other hand, however...

By way of contrast,...

Conversely,...

Whereas...

While...

On the contrary..

## **Concession (showing a certain surprise at what is being said given the nature of what was said before)**

However,...  
Even though,...  
Nevertheless,...  
Nonetheless,...  
Yet, however much we...  
In spite of...we...  
For all this, however,...



## **Persuasive essays – the conclusion**

Your conclusion marks your last point of contact with your reader. You wish therefore to leave a good impression. It should have the ringing finality that the final bars of good music have!

What should be in the conclusion?

- It should briefly revisit the main points/arguments made in your discussion. If you decide to support one side of the debate, you need to make it clear why this choice has been made. You should try to vary your vocabulary somewhat here, employing synonyms wherever possible to give a freshness to your comments rather than recycling the same phrases you may have used earlier.
- It should be clear why this topic has been important one for you to have been discussing at such length. What bearing does it have on the world today or tomorrow? On human happiness? On the kind of society we have made for ourselves?
- It should NOT introduce any specifically new material at this stage.
- It is an elegant point of style if you manage to refer back in your conclusion to some remark you made or question you raised right at the beginning. This signals your essay has come full circle.

## **How your essay should be presented**

Word Count should be between - 800 – 1300 words

Lower word counts will automatically fail. Penalties may be imposed for essays over the word count – e.g. dropping marks.

### **Presentation**

- Use a standard font: e.g. Times, Arial
- Use point 12, standard not bold or italic unless highlighting points
- Alignment should be to the left or justified
- 2cm margin all round
- Use 1.5 or double line spacing
- Print colour black
- Each page should have your name clearly marked
- Sources clearly noted
- Essay must have a title

