

WRT 105: Rhetorical Appeals—Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

Adapted from Missy Watson’s heuristic, Syracuse University

There are many ways writers appeal to audiences when composing arguments, among them appeals to reason (logos), credibility (ethos), and emotions (pathos). These appeals are evident—to one degree or another—in almost all arguments; the **genre** often dictates how much or how little a writer will rely on certain appeals.

[genre: a type of writing used in a particular situation for a certain purpose and often with a conventional form, style, or subject (ex: essay, poem, song, biography)]

LOGOS	ETHOS	PATHOS
: the argument itself; the reasoning the author uses	: how an author builds credibility & trustworthiness	: how an author engages the emotions of her audience
Types of LOGOS Appeals	Ways to Develop ETHOS	Types of PATHOS Appeals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims with evidence • Logical movement through the argument • Theories / scientific facts • Indicated meanings or reasons (because...) • Literal or historical analogies • Definitions • Factual data & statistics • Quotations • Citations from experts & authorities • Informed opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making evident profession /background • Making evident place of publication • Appearing sincere, fair minded, knowledgeable • Conceding to the opposition • Sounding morally / ethically responsible • Using appropriate language for audience and subject • Using correct grammar • Using a professional format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotionally loaded language • Vivid descriptions • Emotional examples • Anecdotes, testimonies, or narratives about experiences or events • Figurative language • Emotional tone (humor, sarcasm, disappointment, excitement, etc.) • References to personal experience
Effect on Audience	Effect on Audience	Effect on Audience
Evokes a cognitive, rational response. Readers get a sense of, “Oh, that makes sense” or “wow, that’s an impressive fact” or “I can see how such-and-such is true.”	Helps reader to see the author as reliable, trustworthy, competent, and credible. The reader comes to respect the author or his/her views.	Evokes an emotional response (fear, sympathy, empathy, anger, excitement, outrage, passion, etc.). Persuasion by emotion.
How to Talk About It	How to Talk About It	How to Talk About It
Ex: The author’s argument is logically persuasive because she develops explicit connections between one claim and another. The reasoning is clear and coherent.	Ex: The author is credible because she devotes time to fairly representing counter arguments.	Ex: The author quickly and readily engages the interest and passions of her audience by relating a personal experience that she then connects to the larger argument.

Every writer works with some kind of **purpose** in mind, and writes within a particular **context**. Good arguments demonstrate an awareness of **kairos**, and arguments typically arise from some kind of **exigence**. All of these factors comprise the complex, historically rooted **rhetorical situation** that a writer’s text arises from.

[purpose: the writer’s *project*; the writer’s aim, what others use the text for, the text’s consequences]

[context: the circumstances of the writer, historical situation of the text, the nature of the audience]

[kairos: timing, appropriateness to occasion and audience, total awareness of rhetorical situation and meaning]

[exigence: urgency, change that needs to be made, a problem to be overcome]