

### A General Summary of Aristotle's Appeals . . .

The goal of argumentative writing is to persuade your audience that your ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else's. The **Greek philosopher Aristotle** divided the means of persuasion, appeals, into three categories--**Ethos, Pathos, Logos**.

**Ethos (Credibility)**, or **ethical appeal**, means convincing by the character of the author. We tend to believe people whom we respect. One of the central problems of argumentation is to project an impression to the reader that you are someone worth listening to, in other words making yourself as author into an authority on the subject of the paper, as well as someone who is likable and worthy of respect.

**Pathos (Emotional)** means persuading by appealing to the reader's emotions. We can look at texts ranging from classic essays to contemporary advertisements to see how pathos and emotional appeals are used to persuade. Language choice affects the audience's emotional response, and emotional appeal can effectively be used to enhance an argument.

**Logos (Logical)** means persuading by the use of reasoning. This will be the most important technique we will study, and Aristotle's favorite. We'll look at deductive and inductive reasoning, and discuss what makes an effective, persuasive reason to back up your claims. Giving reasons is the heart of argumentation, and cannot be emphasized enough. We'll study the types of support you can use to substantiate your thesis, and look at some of the common logical fallacies, in order to avoid them in your writing.

#### **Ethos, Pathos, and Logos**

Logos (Greek for 'word') refers to the internal consistency of the message--the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. The impact of logos on an audience is sometimes called the argument's logical appeal.

Ethos (Greek for 'character') refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the writer or speaker. Ethos is often conveyed through tone and style of the message and through the way the writer or speaker refers to differing views. It can also be affected by the writer's reputation, as it exists independently from the message--his or her expertise in the field, his or her previous record or integrity, and so forth. The impact of ethos is often called the argument's 'ethical appeal' or the 'appeal from credibility.'

Pathos (Greek for 'suffering' or 'experience') is often associated with emotional appeal. But a better equivalent might be 'appeal to the audience's sympathies and imagination.' An appeal to pathos causes an audience not just to respond emotionally, but also to identify with the writer's point of view--to feel what the writer feels. In this sense, pathos evokes a meaning implicit in the verb 'to suffer'--to feel pain imaginatively.... Perhaps the most common way of conveying a pathetic appeal is through narrative or story, which can turn the abstractions of logic into something palpable and present. The values, beliefs, and understandings of the writer are implicit in the story and conveyed imaginatively to the reader. Pathos thus refers to both the

East Carolina University  
Writing Program

emotional and the imaginative impact of the message on an audience, the power with which the writer's message moves the audience to decision or action.

[The above text drawn verbatim from Ramage, John D. and John C. Bean. Writing Arguments. 4th Edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998, 81-82.]

[http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/polis/courses021/ENGL\\_102-78/EthosPathosLogos](http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/polis/courses021/ENGL_102-78/EthosPathosLogos)

### **Or The Shorthand Version:**

**Ethos:** the source's credibility, the speaker's/author's authority

**Logos:** the logic used to support a claim (induction and deduction); can also be the facts and statistics used to help support the argument.

**Pathos:** the emotional or motivational appeals; vivid language, emotional language and numerous sensory details.

### **The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles**

*Rhetoric (n)* - the art of speaking or writing effectively (Webster's Definition)

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion." He described three main forms of rhetoric: **Ethos, Logos, and Pathos.**

In order to be a more effective writer, you must understand these three terms. This site will help you understand their meanings and it will also show you how to make your writing more persuasive.

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/lc/webclass/web/project1/group4/index.html>

It also has some fantastic example web sites that use ethos, logos, and pathos. My ACME and Coyote fans will love these examples.

The following essay "The Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos" was written by Professor Jeanne Fahnestock of the University of Maryland, College Park, and is a very insightful explanation of the three appeals. I highly recommend reading it at the following web site . . .

<http://otal.umd.edu/~mikej/supplements/ethoslogospathos.html>

According to Aristotle, our perception of a speaker or writer's character influences how believable or convincing we find what that person has to say. This projected character is called the speaker or writer's ethos. We are naturally more likely to be persuaded by a person who, we think, has personal warmth, consideration of others, a good mind and solid learning. Often we know something of the character of speakers and writers ahead of time. They come with a reputation or extrinsic ethos. People whose education, experience, and previous performances qualify them to speak on a certain issue earn the special extrinsic ethos of the authority. But whether or not we know anything about the speaker or writer ahead of time, the actual text we

hear or read, the way it is written or spoken and what it says, always conveys an impression of the author's character. This impression created by the text itself is the intrinsic ethos.

Institutions, public roles and publications also project an ethos or credibility. We assume, for example, that The New York Times is a more credible source than the Weekly World News or the National Inquirer. And we usually assume that a person selected for a position of responsibility or honor is more credible than someone without official sanction. These expectations about credibility and ethos are occasionally disappointed.

### **Pathos**

The persuasive appeal of pathos is an appeal to an audience's sense of identity, their self-interest, and their emotions. Many rhetoricians over the centuries have considered pathos the strongest of the appeals, though this view of persuasion is rarely mentioned without a lament about the power of emotion to sway the mind.

Appeals to our sense of identity and self-interest exploit common biases; we naturally bend in the direction of what is advantageous to us, what serves our interests or the interests of any group we believe ourselves a part of. Even when advantage is not an issue, writers who belong to groups we identify with or create groups we can belong to often seem more compelling. We also naturally find more persuasive the speaker or writer who flatters us (especially indirectly) instead of insulting us. Thus skillful writers create a positive image in their words of the audience they are addressing, an image their actual readers can identify with. Who does not want to be the 'sensible, caring person' the arguer describes? Especially powerful are devices that create an identity between the writer and reader so that the speaker almost seems to be the audience addressing itself.

The emotions also strongly assist, perhaps sometimes determine, persuasion. If, for example, a writer wants a reader to evaluate something negatively, she or he may try to arouse the reader's anger. Or to produce action to someone's benefit (e.g., to persuade us to make a charitable donation), an arguer may work on our pity.

Direct appeals to the reader to feel an emotion (e.g., "You should be crying now") are rarely effective. Instead, creating an emotion with words usually requires recreating the scene or event that would in 'real' circumstances arouse the emotion. Thus descriptions of painful or pleasant things work on the emotions. Or the arguer can work on the natural 'trigger' of the emotion. If, for example, we usually feel anger at someone who, we believe, has received benefits without deserving them, then the arguer who wants to make us angry with someone will make a case that person was rewarded unfairly.

### **Logos**

Finally, we come to the 'argument' itself, the explicit reasons the arguer provides to support a position. There are many ways to describe the support provided in an argument, but a sample way to begin is to consider all the premises the author seems to supply. These can be scattered

throughout the argument and expressed indirectly, so identifying premises is a judgment call in itself.

Next ask which of the premises are presented as objects of agreement that the arguer considers as given, elements of the argument taken for granted. Objects of agreement are basically either facts or values. Of course, the facts may not be facts and readers may not agree with the values assumed. Some of the premises will be supported further, but basically every argument has got to come down to certain objects of agreement that it presents as shared between arguer and audience.

You can also classify premises into the following categories. 1. Are they arguments based on definition? In other words, does the arguer make claims about the nature of things, about what terms mean, what features things have? 2. Does the arguer make analogies or comparisons? Does he or she cite parallel cases? 3. Are there appeals to cause and consequences? Arguing from consequence is especially common when policy issues are debated. 4. Does the arguer rely on testimony or authority by citing the received opinions of experts? Or does the author create some kind of authoritative reference group, citing public opinion on what most people think as support for his or her position?

### **Rhetoric, Logos, Pathos, and Ethos THE THREE "ARTISTIC PROOFS."**

There are three artistic proofs that we can create: the appeals from ethos, pathos, and logos.

#### **Ethos**

Persuasion from ethos establishes the speaker or writer's good character. As you saw in the opening of Plato's *Phaedrus*, the Greeks established a sense of ethos by a family's reputation in the community. Our current culture in many ways denies us the use of family ethos as sons and daughters must move out of the community to find jobs or parents feel they must sell the family home to join a retirement community apart from the community of their lives' works. The appeal from a person's acknowledged life contributions within a community has moved from the stability of the family hearth to the mobility of the shiny car. Without the ethos of the good name and handshake, current forms of cultural ethos often fall to puffed-up resumes and other papers. The use of ethos in the form of earned titles within the community—Coach Albert, Deacon Jones, Professor Miller—are diminishing as "truthful" signifiers while commercial-name signifiers or icons appear on clothing—Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, Tommy Hilfiger—disclosing a person's cultural ethos not in terms of a contributor to the community, but in terms of identity-through purchase. Aristotle warns us away from such decoys, telling us that the appeal from ethos comes not from appearances, but from a person's use of language. In a culture where outward appearances have virtually subsumed or taken over the appeal from inner (moral and intellectual) character, the appeal from ethos becomes both problematic and important. Given our culture's privileges/rights of free speech and personal equality, however, we have

enormous possibilities for the appeal from ethos any writer well versed in his or her subject and well spoken about it can gain credibility. This kind of persuasion comes from what a person says and how a person says it, not from any prejudice (pre-judging) of the author.

Aristotle tells us that three things "Inspire confidence in the rhetor's [speaker's/writer's] own character-the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. False statements and bad advice come from the lack of any of these elements. Exhibiting these three aspects of character in your discourse can play a large part in gaining credibility for your ideas. As regards the academic essay, be sure to have your writing appear written by a person of good sense by following the format dictated by the Modern Language Association (M.L.A.) or American Psychological Association (A.P.A.) or whatever your particular academic community wants. Citing a bunch of sources always adds to your credibility (sense of good sense) too. Stylistically in your writing, you can show, if not your good moral character, at least some character identification by sticking some little phrase before using "r" or "we." Like, "As So-in-so's attorney, I suggest . . . Or "As a dental hygienist, I advise..... Or "As an elderly snowboarder for the past decade, I see no reason why..... Actually, using "I" or "we" without such identifiers flips the attempt at ethos into a sense of the generic nobody. Many writing teachers, therefore, just say, "don't use I." Aristotle implies, use "I" or "we" to your advantage with an ethos-appeal sort of phrase out there in front, or else forget it. Despite warnings against believing discourse 'just because it appears written by someone of good sense or because the ideas "look good," you should try to create discourse that "looks good." As a reminder from the Plato chapter (now reinforced by the Aristotelian tip that people judge the credibility of your ideas by your writing skills), you should run your academic essay through the spell checker and bother numerous guinea-pig readers for fixing up the organization and Standard English before letting your essay loose on the world to do its work. If, as Aristotle says, people are going to judge your spoken and/or written ideas by virtue of the appearance of good sense, you'd best attend to that quality.

### **Pathos**

Persuasion from pathos involves engaging the readers' or listeners' emotions. Appealing to pathos does not mean that you just emote or "go off" through your writing. Not that simple. Appealing to pathos in your readers (or listeners), you establish in them a state of reception for your ideas. You can attempt to fill your readers with pity for somebody or contempt for some wrong. You can create a sense of envy or of indignation. Naturally, in order for you to establish at will any desired state of emotion in your readers, you will have to know everything you can about psychology. Maybe that's why Aristotle wrote so many books about the philosophy of human nature. In the Rhetoric itself, Aristotle advises writers at length how to create anger toward some ideal circumstance and how also to create a sense of calm in readers. He also explains principles of friendship and enmity as shared pleasure and pain. He discusses how to create in readers a sense of fear and shame and shamelessness and kindness and unkindness and pity and indignation and envy and indignation and emulation. Then he starts all over and shows how to create such feelings toward ideas in various types of human character' of "people" of virtue and vice; those of youth, prime of life, and old age; and those of good fortune and those of bad fortune." Aristotle warns us, however: knowing (as a good willed

writer) how to get your readers to receive your ideas by making readers "pleased and friendly" or "pained and hostile" is one thing; playing on readers' emotions in ways that make them mindless of concepts and consequences can corrupt the judgment of both individuals and the community.

### **Logos**

Finally, a writer appeals to readers through the appeal to the readers' sense of logos. This is commonly called the logical appeal, and you can use two different types of logic. You can use inductive logic by giving your readers a bunch of similar examples and then drawing from them a general proposition. This logic is pretty simple given this, that, and the other thing-poof, there you go, a conclusion. Or, you can use the deductive enthymeme by giving your readers a few general propositions and then drawing from them a specific truth. Like, "because such-'n-such is true and such-'n-such is true and such-'n-such is true and everybody agrees on this other thing, then-poof, stands to reason, a new truth.

Since the time that a bunch of guys called "The Royal Society" (Hume, Locke, Bacon, etc.) rejected deduction, our culture has generally favored induction because it's often called the "scientific method" and we like science. Historically, people have also attributed feminine metaphors to deductive logic and then easily dismissed it or dismissed the general propositions as "not documented" or "old wives tales."

Source: Henning, Martha L. Friendly Persuasion: Classical Rhetoric--Now! Draft Manuscript. August, 1998. <http://www.millikin.edu/wcenter/workshop7b.html>

A student sample that uses these three proofs to analyze a contemporary speech given by George Bush can be read at the following web site. You can agree with or disagree with the author's interpretations, but the sample might provide you with an example of how you can use these terms to help you analyze your own article. Remember it's not the issue; it's the way the issue is presented by the author.

[Ethos, Pathos, and Logos Applied: George W. Bush Speaking at 'Ground Zero'](http://hyper.vcsun.org/HyperNews/battias/get/cs327/s02/thought/1.html)  
<http://hyper.vcsun.org/HyperNews/battias/get/cs327/s02/thought/1.html>

The following web site presents student sample paragraphs that have been revised and, as a result are much stronger. I strongly suggest looking at these paragraphs in order to fully understand how Ethos, Pathos, and Logos can be used to analyze your articles.

[Paragraph Development \(for Ethos, Logos, Pathos Essay\)](http://www.merced.cc.ca.us/pirov/paraethos.htm)  
<http://www.merced.cc.ca.us/pirov/paraethos.htm>