

# O WLS Writing Guides: Ethos, Logos, Pathos



Classical Aristotelian rhetoric discusses three modes of argument, or appeals, that arguers employ to persuade audiences. Analyzing and critiquing these appeals in an argument is one way of evaluating the quality and persuasiveness of the argument.

ETHOS	LOGOS	PATHOS
A mode of argument based on character or authority.	A mode of argument based on logic.	A mode of argument based on emotion.
An argument that appeals to ethos tries to persuade you that the author is reliable, trustworthy, <i>ethical</i> , and that his or her argument can be trusted.	An argument that appeals to logos tries to convince you to conclude what the author concludes via <i>logical</i> reasoning and evidence.	An argument that appeals to pathos tries to evoke emotions ( <i>passions</i> ), to make you feel what the author feels towards a subject—fearful, angry, compassionate, etc.
<p><b>To identify the appeal to ethos</b>, look for ways the author develops credibility for him/herself and the argument:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author’s credentials and expertise (profession or background)</li> <li>• First-hand experience or testimony</li> <li>• Appearing sincere, fair, knowledgeable, morally and ethically upstanding</li> <li>• Credible sources of evidence</li> <li>• Addressing opposing views with respect and conceding points where appropriate</li> </ul>	<p><b>To identify the appeal to logos</b>, look for evidence and logical reasoning meant to make you think rationally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data (facts and statistics)</li> <li>• Examples (real or hypothetical)</li> <li>• Research findings</li> <li>• Testimony</li> <li>• Analogy/comparison</li> <li>• Cause-effect reasoning</li> <li>• Logical sequencing of ideas (<i>If...then...</i> reasoning, etc.)</li> <li>• Induction (drawing a conclusion from specific evidence)</li> <li>• Deduction (drawing a conclusion from general principles)</li> </ul>	<p><b>To identify the appeal to pathos</b>, look for words, statements, examples, and details meant to evoke an emotional reaction (not rational thinking) or to help audience relate on a personal level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally loaded language</li> <li>• Figurative language (metaphor and simile)</li> <li>• Vivid descriptions</li> <li>• Emotional examples, anecdotes, testimonies, or narratives</li> <li>• Emotional tone (angry, sad, sympathetic, humorous, amused, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples of how to write about ethos:</b></p> <p>The author builds his ethos by demonstrating his expertise on the topic and offering data from his own research.</p> <p>The author’s ethos is enhanced as he addresses opposing views and refutes them effectively.</p>	<p><b>Examples of how to write about logos:</b></p> <p>The author appeals to logos by supporting her claims with relevant examples.</p> <p>The writer uses cause-effect reasoning to prove the negative outcomes of the policy.</p>	<p><b>Examples of how to write about pathos:</b></p> <p>Vivid descriptions of the poverty he witnessed evoke the readers’ sympathy, effectively appealing to pathos.</p> <p>The writer employs the appeal to pathos through emotionally compelling testimony of soldiers, helping readers relate to war on a more personal level.</p>