



## WRITING A PERSUASIVE ESSAY

A persuasive essay is written to convince the reader(s) to share your point of view about an issue. You will write a four-paragraph essay that provides a clearly stated opinion on an issue and a well-organized convincing argument that supports your opinion.

A persuasive essay contains three parts. The chart below displays the structure of a persuasive essay.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay
<p>➤ <b>Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Background Information</li> <li>- Thesis Statement</li> </ul>
<p>➤ <b>Body Paragraph(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topic Sentence</li> <li>- Body Sentences</li> <li>Supporting Details</li> </ul>
<p>➤ <b>Conclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restated Thesis</li> <li>- Conclusion Strategy</li> </ul>

### Step 1- Prewriting

For a persuasive essay, the first step is to select a topic that people have different opinions about. The prewriting step also includes considering various opinions and arguments about the topic before deciding on your opinion. As you decide on your own view or belief, be sure to consider the opposite points of view as well. It is important to think about why people might disagree with your argument.

### Step 2- Writing the First Draft

#### THE INTRODUCTION

The Persuasive Essay
<p>➤ Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Background Information</li> <li>- Thesis Statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Argument or Reasoning</li> <li>○ Persuasive Language</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The introductory paragraph of your essay contains two parts:

1. *Background information* about the topic of the essay helps your reader understand and become interested in the topic. Before you begin writing, ask yourself: *What important background information*



*does my reader need to know? or What's the situation that I am writing about?* Do not give too many details, just provide only what the reader needs.

2. The *thesis statement* presents the controlling idea of the essay. It may be one or two sentences. In a persuasive essay, your thesis statement will include your opinion or point of view on the issue. The thesis statement is typically the last sentence of the introductory paragraph.

In a persuasive essay, the background often includes opposing views people have about the issue. Then the thesis statement presents the writer's opinion or point of view. The thesis statement in a persuasive essay is similar to the topic sentence in a persuasive paragraph because you want to convince your reader to share your point of view. Therefore, your thesis statement should also have persuasive language-words and phrases that suggest that you are giving an opinion. Here are some examples of persuasive language include:

Persuasive Language	
Modal Verbs	Expressions
should have to need to must	Without a doubt ... I would be a mistake (not) to ... There can be no denying (the fact) that ...

I strongly believe that ...  
It is irresponsible to ...  
It is a good idea to ...  
It is a mistake to ...  
It is definitely the right decision to ...

Example:

**Background Information:** [Children are full of energy and ideas; however, their ideas don't always make sense. Sometimes their ideas might even be dangerous. The role of parents is to guide their children and, when necessary, to make proper decisions for their protection. This can be tricky. On the one hand, parents don't want to put their child in harm's way, but on the other hand, they don't want to step on their child's dreams either. Paul Romero faced such a challenge when his nine-year-old son, Jordan, expressed a desire to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. I can appreciate his desire to educate his son and help Jordan pursue his dreams.] **Thesis Statement:** [However, I strongly believe that Paul Romero's decision to allow Jordan to climb these mountains was foolish and irresponsible.]

**Thesis Statement:**

persuasive language	issue	opinion
I strongly believe	decision to allow Jordan to climb these mountains	was foolish and irresponsible.

Notice that the background information in the example gives some details about the topic and then briefly presents different perspectives on the issue. The writer also provides basic information about Paul and Jordan Romero, and expresses an understanding of why Paul Romero made the choice he did. Then in the



thesis statement, the writer uses the transition word *however* and persuasive language to express his contrasting point of view, which he will develop and support in the rest of the essay.

## THE BODY

The *body paragraphs* of an essay develop and support the point of view that is expressed in the thesis statement. Just as a paragraph has a group of sentences that support the topic sentence, an essay contains one or more paragraphs that provide information in support of the thesis statement.

### Writing Topic Sentences

In an essay, each body paragraph usually begins with a *topic sentence*. These sentences often rephrase and build on the thesis statement. In a persuasive essay, your topic sentences should mention the topic and the controlling idea. They might also include your point of view or opinion. Your topic sentences should include one specific reason that supports the opinion you expressed in your thesis statement. Then the rest of the body paragraph develops and supports that reason with more information, such as explanations, examples, facts, and anecdotes-brief stories from your own experience.

To connect your ideas from paragraph to paragraph, it is important to use transition words. In a persuasive essay, listing order transition words in topic sentences helps your reader to follow your argument. These transition words can be placed in two different groups.

Group 1: Often Used with <i>Because</i>	Group 2: Often Used with <i>Reason</i>
First, Second, Additionally, Most important, Finally,	One reason The second reason Another reason The most important reason The final reason

Notice that the transition words in Group 1 are followed by a comma. The transition words in Group 2 are often used in a three-part sentence with **that ... is that**.

Examples:

**First**, teenagers like Jordan Romero should not be allowed to make such dangerous climbs **because** young people need a stable home environment.

One reason **that** teenagers like Jordan Romero should not be allowed to make such dangerous climbs **is that** young people need a stable home environment.

### Developing a Body Paragraph

You must support an opinion with reasons, examples, facts, and anecdotes. In a persuasive essay, the topic sentences of your body paragraphs will state the reasons for your opinion and you will develop and support those reasons with supporting details such as explanations, examples, facts, or anecdotes.

Examples:

**Fact:** Each of the Seven Summits is on a different continent.



**Explanation:** Because these summits are on different continents, Jordan will be able to learn about the people, customs, and culture in different parts of the world.

**Example:** For example, when he was in China, he probably learned things about the Chinese language, families, and food.

**Fact:** Jordan was nine years old when he first learned about the Seven Summits.

**Explanation:** Wanting to encourage his son and give him the best education possible, Paul Romero began working hard to help make his son's dream come true. He must have believed that these experiences would have a lasting effect on Jordan and his future.

**Anecdote:** When I was a teen, my family lived in Nepal. I became interested in the art of Nepalese wood carving and its connection to architecture. My experiences there have greatly influenced my decisions about my education and career.

Some writers choose to end a body paragraph with an interesting or thought-provoking comment or question. Others return to the controlling idea in the topic sentence and sum up the reason. You might also choose to wait until the concluding paragraph to summarize your reasoning and argument.

Examples:

**Summary:** Climbing the Seven Summits is a valuable experience, and Jordan is fortunate that his father made it happen for him.

**Thought-Provoking Question:** What better way is there for a teenager to learn about the world?

## THE CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION - Restated Thesis - Concluding Strategy
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Your essay will end with a concluding paragraph that returns to the idea in the thesis statement.

In the concluding paragraph, restate the opinion expressed in the thesis statement using different words. Then use a concluding strategy to persuade the reader that the point of view expressed is valid.

Your conclusion does not need to be very long-just long enough to return to the controlling idea in your thesis statement and end in an interesting and persuasive way.

To signal to your reader that you are concluding your essay, you may also want to use a transition word or phrase such as *In conclusion* ... to begin your conclusion. However; if you return to the controlling idea in your thesis statement in a clear way, a transition word or phrase may not always be necessary.

To conclude your essay in an interesting, convincing way, use one or more of these strategies:

1. Look to the future of the issue and comment on it.



2. Propose an alternative that should have or could have been done and explain what might have happened as a result.
3. Summarize the opposing point of view that you mentioned in your introduction and show again why your point of view is better.

### **REVISING AND EDITING**

Revising your work is an essential part of the writing process. This is your opportunity to be sure that your essay has all the important pieces and that it is clear.

Before you hand in your revised essay, you must check it for any errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

#### **Revising and Editing Checklist**

Did you ...

- express the controlling idea of the whole essay in your thesis statement?
- give enough essential background in your introduction?
- present an opposing point of view in your introduction?
- introduce your topic sentences with transition words?
- give enough explanations, facts, examples, or anecdotes to develop and support your controlling ideas?
- restate the controlling idea of the essay in your conclusion?
- use an effective concluding strategy?
- use a variety of word forms correctly?
- give your essay an interesting title?
- use make, have, let, help, and get correctly?
- use correct verb forms, punctuation, and spelling?
- use the correct forms of words (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns)?

### **SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY**

You have read parts of this persuasive essay already. Now read the entire essay to see how the parts fit together.

#### **A Parent's Job is to Protect**

Children are full of energy and ideas; however, their ideas don't always make sense. Sometimes their ideas might even be dangerous. The role of parents is to guide their children and, when necessary, to make proper decisions for their protection. This can be tricky. On the one hand, parents don't want to put their child in harm's way, but on the other hand, they don't want to step on their child's dreams either. Paul Romero faced such a challenge when his nine-year-old son, Jordan, expressed a desire to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. I can appreciate his desire to educate his son and help Jordan pursue his dreams. However, I strongly believe that Paul Romero's decision to allow Jordan to climb these mountains, and especially Mt. Everest, was foolish and irresponsible.

First of all, his family should not have let him climb because he is physically too young to do it. Even though at 5'8" and 140 pounds, he is above average for a 13-year-old boy, his body is still growing. His bones and muscles are still growing and his brain is still developing. Researchers are not sure about the



effect of high altitudes on teenagers because they have not studied teens specifically. Some say it can cause long-term brain damage. The article, "At 13, is Jordan Romero too young to climb Mount Everest?" quotes a leading authority on altitude sickness, Peter Hackett. He said that some researchers believe that a young brain is more resilient than an adult brain, but others argue that the brains of the young are more vulnerable. Clearly the research is not conclusive. However, I don't understand why a parent would put a growing child at risk in this way.

Another reason why I think the decision was wrong is that Mother Nature is too unpredictable. We have seen the destructive potential of storms such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Even specialists could not handle or control the effects of that storm. How will a 13-year-old make the tough decisions he needs to when faced with the destructive power of nature? If he makes one mistake, he could affect the lives of those traveling with him. Look at the case of Abby Sunderland, the 13-year-old girl who was encouraged by her father to sail solo around the world. In the end the weather conditions were just too challenging for her to handle. She and her boat were lost at sea. Only after a desperate and expensive search was Abby found and brought home to safety. The event was too much for her and she had to be rescued. Granted, Jordan Romero was not climbing alone, but the natural dangers of Everest were still there. It's a parent's responsibility to protect children —not to put them in harm's way. Why would parents even be willing to let their child be in such a dangerous situation?

I believe that any responsible parent would disapprove of the decision to allow a boy to climb such a dangerous mountain at such a young age. Supporters of Paul Romero point to the fact that this climb was successful. They reached the summit and no one was seriously hurt along the way. However, what will happen next time? Jordan Romero's climb sends the wrong message to kids and parents. I hope that other families will avoid taking such risks. It's great to get an education through experience and to follow one's dreams, but not with the costs of risking good health or life itself.

## **WRITING TASK**

**Choose one of the topics below to write a well-organized persuasive essay within 250-300 words.**

1. The benefits of mandatory community service for all high school students.
2. The prohibition of plastic bags to reduce environmental pollution.
3. Restrictions on fast food advertising can help combat obesity.

*taken and adapted*