Most people are able to drive a car without fully understanding exactly how the car operates. Making an argument is the same way—most of us attempt to persuade people every day without understanding exactly how persuasion works. However, learning how a strong argument is crafted empowers us to better communicate and persuade others to understand our viewpoints. Ethos, Pathos, and Logos are three strategies commonly employed when attempting to persuade a reader.

### What Are Pathos, Logos and Ethos?

**Pathos,** or the appeal to emotion, means to persuade an audience by purposely evoking certain emotions to make them feel the way the author wants them to feel. Authors make deliberate word choices, use meaningful language, and use examples and stories that evoke emotion. Authors can desire a range of emotional responses, including sympathy, anger, frustration, or even amusement.

**Logos,** or the appeal to logic, means to appeal to the audiences’ sense of reason or logic. To use logos, the author makes clear, logical connections between ideas, and includes the use of facts and statistics. Using historical and literal analogies to make a logical argument is another strategy. There should be no holes in the argument, also known as logical fallacies, which are unclear or wrong assumptions or connections between ideas.

**Ethos** is used to convey the writer’s credibility and authority. When evaluating a piece of writing, the reader must know if the writer is qualified to comment on this issue. The writer can communicate their authority by using credible sources; choosing appropriate language; demonstrating that they have fairly examined the issue (by considering the counterargument); introducing their own professional, academic or authorial credentials; introducing their own personal experience with the issue; and using correct grammar and syntax.

### Sample Paragraph

*Pathos:* the author paints a vivid picture to evoke a feeling from the reader—sadness and pity for the abused animal.

*Imagine this:* a small dog sits in a dark, cold garage. His hair is matted and dirty; he is skinny and weak from going days without food. There is no water for him to drink, no person to give him love and no blanket to keep him warm at night. While this might be a hard scenario to imagine, it is not an uncommon one in America today. *According to the Humane Society of the United States, nearly 1,000,000 animals are abused or die from abuse every year.* As a veterinarian with 30 years of experience, I have seen how even one incident of abuse can affect an animal for the rest of its life. As a society, we need to be more aware of this terrible problem and address this issue before it gets worse.

*Logos:* the author uses a startling statistic to appeal to our intellect. *Keep in mind that these three strategies can often overlap.* This sentence qualifies as both Logos and Ethos because it cites a reputable organization, so we know the author is using credible sources.

*Ethos:* the author establishes his own credibility by stating his occupation and experience.

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How Do I Know if the Author is Using Pathos, Logos or Ethos?

**Pathos**—does she appeal to the emotions of her reader?
- **Does she use individuals’ stories** to “put a face” on the problem you’re exploring? For example, telling the story of one specific child being abused can be more powerful than giving statistics on child abuse.

- **Does she use charged language or words that carry appropriate connotations?** For example, if a writer describes a gun as a “sleek, silver piece of sophisticated weaponry,” she is delivering a much different image than if she writes, “a cold hunk of metal, dark and barbaric and ready to kill.”

**Logos**—does the writer appeal to the rational mind by using logic and evidence?
- **Does she include facts and statistics** that support her point? It’s more convincing to tell the reader that “80% of students have committed some form of plagiarism,” than simply saying that “Lots of students have plagiarized.”

- **Does she walk us through the logical quality** of her argument? Does she show us how ideas connect in a rational way? For example: “English students have been able to raise their overall grade by meeting with peer tutors, so it’s safe to assume that math students could also benefit from frequent tutoring sessions.” This example points out that logically, if the result has been seen in one situation, then it should be seen in a different but similar situation.

- **Does she avoid logical fallacies?** A few examples of these are:
  - Hasty generalizations: “Even though the movie just started, I know it’s going to be boring.”
  - Slippery Slope: “If the government legalizes marijuana, eventually they’ll legalize all drugs.”
  - Circular Argument: “Barack Obama is a good communicator because he speaks effectively.”

**Ethos**—is this writer trustworthy?
- **What are her credentials?** Is she an expert in the field? Has she written past essays, articles or books about this topic?

- **Does she use reputable sources?** Does she support her statements with sources from established publications like *The New York Times* or a government census report? Does she fail to mention any sources?

- **Is she a fair minded person who has considered all sides of this issue?** Has she acknowledged any common ground she shares with the opposite side? Does she include a counterargument and refutation?