In a persuasive argument paper, your goal as a writer is to convince your readers of the validity of your argument. You may want your reader to adopt a certain point of view or to pursue a particular course of action. Your argument should be developed using solid evidence; you will need to state facts, give logical reasons, cite experts, and use examples when appropriate. Before you begin writing, it is apt to consider the following:

1. Which side of the issue are you going to write about, and what solution(s) will you offer?
2. Who is your audience? Do they agree with you? Disagree? Are they neutral?
3. What sort of research will you need to make your argument?
4. What evidence will be most successful in convincing your audience, and how will you present this evidence in a clear and concise manner?
5. What is the opposing viewpoint, and how will you address it?

The structure of your argument may follow various methods, including those outlined below:

**Aristotelian Model (Classical Rhetorical Model)**

Traditional Aristotelian argument relies on the use of ethos, pathos, and logos to appeal to the reader and either confirm or refute a position:

- An appeal to the audience’s sense of ethics is called *ethos*. Using ethos allows the writer to establish both her own moral integrity and authority on the subject at hand, as well as appeal to her readers’ higher morals.
- An appeal to the audience’s emotions is called *pathos*. Using pathos allows the writer to incite her readers’ sympathies, compassions, resentments, or anger.
- An appeal to the audience’s sense of logic is called *logos*. Using logos allows the writer to rationalize her position for her readers and relies on her readers’ sense of reason.

**Toulmin’s Model**

Contemporary philosopher Stephen Toulmin presents an approach to argument that is rooted in Aristotle’s early model but also takes into account probabilities. Toulmin states that a successful argument must offer a *claim* (the central assertion the writer is making), support that claim with *data* (typically in the form of facts, statistics, or other evidence), have a justifiable *warrant* (an assumption that the claim is reasonable), identify *qualifiers* (limits on the claim) which place the claim in a certain context, and acknowledge *rebuttals* (exceptions to the claim).

**Rogerian Model**

Renowned psychologist Carl Rogers proposes an alternative approach to argument that is less adversarial than traditional Aristotelian argument and relies instead on consensus-building. Rogerian argument seeks to find common ground between opposing positions. A successful Rogerian argument will present the problem, express a clear understanding of the opposing position, acknowledge the contexts in which the opposing position is applicable, offer contexts in which the author’s position is applicable, and state how these two positions can enhance each other.
Dialogic Model

Catherine E. Lamb propagates another alternative argument method, which is also rooted in finding common ground, but seeks to do so cooperatively and collaboratively. She asserts that traditional approaches to argument are too dependent on the monologic and offers negotiation and mediation as means to approach a problem dialogically, bringing opposing parties into conversation with each other in search of solutions. In this model, opposing parties hold equal power, as both are active participants in the search for a solution. Lamb’s model values a “feminine” approach to an issue, where consensus is employed.

Rhetorical/Generative Model

Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor offer what they call the “rhetorical/generative” approach to argument. This approach asks and answers four questions. The first question, “What is this thing?” is answered by a categorical proposition, which places the topic at hand in a certain category. The second question, “What caused it or what effects does it have?” is answered by a causal statement, which links the topic to certain causes or effects. The third question, “Is it good or bad?” is answered by evaluations, which analyze the evidence being used. The final question, “What should be done about it?” is answered by proposals, which offer possible solutions or courses of action to address the issue.

For example:

1. Categorical proposition: Violent video games are harmful to our nation’s youth.
2. Causal statement: Violent video games are harmful to our nation’s youth because they promote aggressive and destructive behaviors.
3. Evaluations: Studies have identified a causal link between youth who play violent video games and increased aggression and violence.
4. Proposals: The video game rating system should be altered so that violent games are not made available to anyone under the age of 18.

Summaries of these methods derived from:

