

Persuasive Language Techniques

1. Attacks

Attacks are a version of playing the man, not the ball. If you can make your opposition seem less credible, you may be more likely to get a reader to agree with your side of the argument. At the least, attention can be taken away from the issue itself and put on to the personality. Attacks can attempt to belittle or embarrass or just plain insult an opponent. The idea is that the weaker you can make your opposition appear, the stronger you and your contention will appear.

Example text:

That's the sort of suggestion I'd expect from a nose-in-the-air toff like Turnbull.

2. Colloquial Language

Colloquial (slang) language can be used in different ways. It can set the writer up as knowledgeable, on the inside of a social group. A writer may also use slang in a sarcastic manner, to attack an opponent or mock an argument. It may also be used to appeal to a reader's own sense of cultural identity, or reinforce a writer's overall tone.

Example text:

She's a top sheila that Jessica Rowe. Channel Nine are stark raving to give her the boot.

3. Emotive Appeals

Like many persuasive techniques, emotive appeals aim to engage people's feelings, not logic or reason. If a writer can manipulate a reader to feel a certain way, that reader should be more likely to agree with the writer's overall contention. Often writers will use other forms of persuasive language techniques in order to appeal to people's emotions.

There is a huge variety of emotive responses that can be aimed at by writers, such as:

Democracy	Family values	Hedonism	Reason and logic
Charity	Fashion-sense	Hip-pocket nerve	Safety
Compassion	Fear of change	Morality	Self-interest
Environmentalism	Freedom	Nostalgia	Sense of justice
Fairness	Group loyalty	Patriotism	Vanity

Example text 1:

Soon we will see civilians lying dead in our own streets if we do not act against terrorism.

Example text 2:

In our society today there are people living without food or adequate shelter. Such basics of life can be provided if those of us who can afford to, give to organisations such as the Salvation Army, to help those unable to help themselves.

4. Inclusive language

Inclusive language aims to directly address the reader, either personally or as a member of a shared group. This involves using such words as us, we, you, our.

Example text:

It is time for us to show our belief in the value of mateship and a fair go, and give generously to the Good Friday Appeal.

5. Rhetorical question

A rhetorical question is one in which the answer is so obvious it is not required. The idea here is not to receive an answer, merely to reinforce a point.

Example text:

Should footballers be treated as above the law?

6. Exaggeration

A writer may describe a situation in forceful, overblown language in order to make the issue seem more important or urgent than it may otherwise be considered. Exaggerating the scale of an issue can draw an emotional response from a reader. Also known as hyperbole.

Example text:

Councils are losing the war against vandals.

7. Emphasis

There are three types of emphasis that writers use to draw the reader's attention to a specific point or idea: Repetition; Cumulation and Alliteration

Repetition

Repeating a single word a number of times over is repetition.

Example text:

We will all suffer for years to come unless we stop this government, stop them in the workplace, stop them in the polls, and stop them on election day.

Cumulation

Using many similar words in a short space is cumulation.

Example text:

This task requires guts, determination, grit and willpower.

Alliteration

Repetition of the first sound in consecutive words is alliteration.

Example text:

To rip people off so blatantly shows Mr. Craven to be cruel, calculating and crooked.

8. Evidence.

There are three main types of evidence: Anecdotal; Expert Opinion and Statistical

Anecdotal evidence

An anecdote is a tale involving real life events, a true story. Such stories can be used by writers as evidence to back their claims. To support a contention, and to make themselves appear more credible, writers often use personal anecdotes.

Example text:

I can tell you that, as a single mother of two, I received very little in the way of financial support during my attempts to return to fulltime work.

Expert opinion

To make a writer's position seem more credible, they may quote the opinions of experts that correspond with their own. As in a court case, experts are often called on to make one side seem stronger and more believable.

Example text:

My stand on the issue of exposed underwear is supported by fashion designer Ruby Reed, who recently stated: "Anyone whose underwear is exposed due to low slung jeans should be punished as forcefully as possible."

Statistical evidence

Like any form of evidence, statistics can be used to make an argument seem more conclusive, a writer's opinion more valid. Often statistics are used that are out of context, or from unreliable sources. As the saying goes, "There are lies, damned lies, and statistics."

Example text:

A recent survey found that 90% of students favoured no school uniforms at all.