

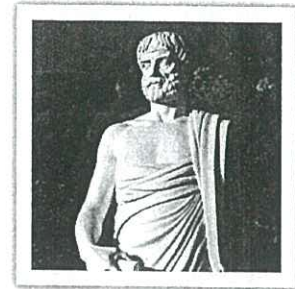
• Reading Comprehension Assessment

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

Tools of Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of convincing someone to agree with your point of view. According to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, there are three basic tools of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos is a speaker's way of convincing the audience that she is a credible source. An audience will consider a speaker credible if she seems trustworthy, reliable, and sincere. This can be done in many ways. For example, a speaker can develop ethos by explaining how much experience or education she has in the field. After all, you would be more likely to listen to advice about how to take care of your teeth from a dentist than a firefighter. A speaker can also create ethos by convincing the audience that she is a good person who has their best interests at heart. If an audience cannot trust you, you will not be able to persuade them.



Pathos is a speaker's way of connecting with an audience's emotions. For example, a speaker who is trying to convince an audience to vote for him might say that he alone can save the country from a terrible war. These words are intended to fill the audience with fear, thus making them want to vote for him. Similarly, a charity organization that helps animals might show an audience pictures of injured dogs and cats. These images are intended to fill the viewers with pity. If the audience feels bad for the animals, they will be more likely to donate money.

Logos is the use of facts, information, statistics, or other evidence to make your argument more convincing. An audience will be more likely to believe you if you have data to back up your claims. For example, a commercial for soap might tell you that laboratory tests have shown that their soap kills all 7,000,000 of the bacteria living on your hands right now. This piece of information might make you more likely to buy their brand of soap. Presenting this evidence is much more convincing than simply saying "our soap is the best!" Use of logos can also increase a speaker's ethos; the more facts a speaker includes in his argument, the more likely you are to think that he is educated and trustworthy.

Although ethos, pathos, and logos all have their strengths, they are often most effective when they are used together. Indeed, most speakers use a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade their audiences. The next time you listen to a speech, watch a commercial, or listen to a friend try to convince you to lend him some money, be on the lookout for these ancient Greek tools of persuasion.

1) As used in paragraph 2, what is the best antonym for **credible**?

- A. unintelligent
- B. boring
- C. dishonest
- D. amazing

2) Amy is trying to convince her mother to buy her a pair of \$200 shoes. She says: "Mom, the shoes I have are really old and ugly. If I don't get these new shoes, everyone at school is going to laugh at me. I will be so embarrassed that I will want to die." What form of persuasion is Amy using here?

- A. pathos
- B. ethos
- C. logos
- D. a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos



- 3) According to the passage, logos can build ethos because
- A. an audience is more easily convinced by facts and information than simple appeals to emotions like pity or fear
 - B. an audience is more likely to trust a speaker who uses evidence to support his argument
 - C. a speaker who overuses pathos might make an audience too emotional; audiences who are too frightened or too sad are unlikely to be persuaded
 - D. a speaker can use misleading or false information to make his argument seem more convincing
- 4) Gareth is running for mayor. He tells his audience: "Under our current mayor, there have been 15,000 new cases of unemployment. If he stays in office, who knows how many more people will lose their jobs? The number could go up even higher. When I was the CEO of Magnatech, I helped to create over 1,000 new jobs. I can do the same thing for this city if you vote for me." Which form of persuasion is Gareth using here?
- I. pathos
 - II. logos
 - III. ethos
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
- 5) According to the passage, the most effective tool of persuasion is
- A. ethos, because you cannot persuade an audience that does not trust you
 - B. logos, because it can also be used to build ethos
 - C. a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos
 - D. pathos, because human beings are most easily persuaded by emotion
- 6) Imagine you wanted to convince an uninformed person to take a political position that is the same as yours. What issue would you try to talk to this person about? How would you include ethos, pathos, and logos in your persuasion? Make your case below.

I believe that guns should be illegal, and you should too. Think about all of poor people who have been killed by guns. Their families must be devastated, imagine if a child had to see their parents get shot, or if THEY were shot. Many, many people have been killed by guns, over a thousand people each year. 60% of people agree with my opinion. You should trust me, I spend four years learning about gun laws.

- 7) Some persuasive programming involves only ethos, some involves only pathos, and some involves only logos. Which of these single-tactic persuasion types do you find most effective? Which one are least effective? Why?

I believe that simply using one of these tactics would make a very weak piece, but if it must be done, using purely pathos would be the most effective of the three. When the reader reads something emotional or personal to them, they are likely to feel the impact of this tactic. If they feel the emotional connection, they won't really care about who's saying it (most of the time). Logos would be second most effective because it alerts the reader of the scale of the topic. Ethos is least effective because people normally trust others' information. These tactics differ from person.

- 8) Sometimes ethos, pathos, and logos can be used to make people believe things that are not entirely true. Can you think of an example? How can people avoid being tricked by faulty persuasion tactics?

When someone hears pathos, they might feel too emotional to listen properly, or they might not care about the other things that the person has to say. Also, by simply lying about the ethos, you can easily fool the person listening/reading. Even people with high reputations can sometimes feel the need to lie. With logos, you can tell someone a big number, but not put it in context. For example, you can say that a nation has hundreds of thousands of people, but if the person doesn't know how many people are in other nations, they might think that this is a lot.