

## The Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetorical appeals, postulated by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, are methods by which speakers persuade their audiences to do or believe something. Rhetorical appeals have been a part of speaking and writing for a very long time and are still commonly taught in writing classes. These appeals are a part of our daily lives; we see the appeals in commercials, news stories, and in our arguments with others. Being able to spot the appeals being used in a text helps us identify how the author is trying to persuade us and assess whether or not their argument is a good one. There are three main appeals that form what is often called “The Rhetorical Triangle”: logos, ethos, and pathos. There is another appeal that is discussed a little less often: kairos.

### Logos

Logos literally means “words.” It is the appeal to reasoning and intellect in order to persuade the audience to believe or do something. We use logos when we present facts, use arguments/logic, present data, and try to support our claims with evidence.

#### Examples:

- 56% of Maricopa County voters say \_\_\_\_\_. With a majority of voters endorsing this \_\_\_\_\_, we need to do \_\_\_\_\_.
- Arguments in favor of expelling students from drug-related offenses assume these students (1) are dangerous to place around other students and (2) that they are lost causes. Neither of these things are true. In fact, there is evidence that \_\_\_\_\_ . . .

### Ethos

Ethos is the appeal to credibility/expertise in order to persuade the audience to believe or do something. We use ethos when we use qualifications, credentials, lived experience/testimony, moral character, and scholarly methodology to support a claim. What do we mean by “scholarly methodology”? This is the set of practices treated as the standard in academic research; it includes things like doing rigorous research, accurately citing sources, and treating sources fairly (not misrepresenting or intentionally misinterpreting them). Your ability to follow scholarly methodology says you are credible because you have carefully done your research and that you are well-intentioned in your argument (this makes you more trustworthy!).

#### Examples:

- 8 out of 10 dentists recommend using Colgate.
- Katie, a long-time resident of Mesa, says the city doesn’t feel as tight-knit as it used to be.

- “I’ve worked with shelter dogs for 15 years now,” Maria said. “Trust me when I say there is no dog who doesn’t deserve a good, loving home.”

## **Pathos**

Pathos is the appeal to emotion in order to persuade the audience to believe or do something. We use pathos when we try to make our audience empathize, feel sad, feel afraid, feel guilty, or feel optimistic—just to name a few common examples. We can do this by telling stories that make readers feel sad or nostalgic, using emotional language, showing emotional images like those of sad animals in shelters, establishing a relationship with the audience so that they will empathize with us, or describing hypothetical cases that make our audience feel desirous of the content of that hypothetical case (think: “Don’t you want a hot, cheesy slice of pizza fresh out of the oven?”).

### **Examples:**

- If we keep cutting down these trees, orangutan mothers and their poor little babies will have no place to shelter in.
- One sip of our tea will transport you to an idyllic meadow where baby deer graze by a nearby pond and the faint sound of a harp plays in the distance.
- Using an image of a cute animal that viewers will associate with your product.

## **Kairos**

Kairos is the appeal to time, urgency, or context. We use Kairos when we tell our audience that now is the right or only time to act.

### **Examples:**

- If we don’t act NOW, tens of thousands of jobs will be lost.
- There has never been a better time for us to invest in behavioral health programs.
- This deal won’t last long, so hurry!