# Summary table of persuasive techniques

Use this table as a quick reference to build your understanding of the various ways popular techniques can be used to persuade and/or manipulate readers, viewers or listeners. (Note that the given examples may not demonstrate all the points in the third column.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasive technique and definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>How the technique persuades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alteration</td>
<td>Repetition of a consonant, especially at the start of words.</td>
<td><em>Lillie, Lillie, Lillie left in limbo.</em> (Headline to a story about a child waiting for surgery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdote</td>
<td>A story about someone or something that the writer has experienced or heard about.</td>
<td>Three years ago my brother was killed in a car crash. Every month I watch with horror as the road continues to rise.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to family values</td>
<td>Suggests that families are good, especially traditional nuclear families.</td>
<td><em>This criminal would not have broken the law if he’d been raised in a healthy, traditional family setting.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to fear and insecurity</td>
<td>Arouses fear and anxiety by suggesting that harmful or unpleasant effects will follow.</td>
<td>The city has become a go-go zone due to alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence spilling out from clubs and affecting innocent bystanders.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to the hip-pocket nerve</td>
<td>Suggests that we should pay the least amount possible, either individually or as a society.</td>
<td>Victorians are losing a lot of money due to excessive speeding fines and government revenue-raising.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to loyalty and patriotism</td>
<td>Suggests that we should be loyal to our group and love our country.</td>
<td>Students should be taught more about Australian history so they can learn to value our great country.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to tradition and custom</td>
<td>Suggests that traditional customs are valuable and should be preserved.</td>
<td>All businesses should be closed on Anzac day to observe and maintain the traditional day of respect.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks and praise</td>
<td>Attacks or praises an individual or group.</td>
<td><em>The CEO of this bank is both immoral and unethical.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clichés</td>
<td>Overused phrase quickly understood by a wide audience.</td>
<td><em>Some celebrities may seem shallow, but we shouldn’t judge a book by its cover.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional language</td>
<td>Language that has a strong emotional impact. Uses the positive and negative connotations of words to influence the reader’s response.</td>
<td><em>Helpless animals are suffering needlessly and painful deaths.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Persuasive techniques and definition

### Evidence

Use of facts and figures to suggest a rational or scientific basis for a point of view.

- *According to food industry statistics, Victorians spend $3.8 billion a year on takeaways.*
- *Numbers and scientific findings appear factual.*
- *Make the writer’s viewpoint seem objective rather than subjective/personal.*
- *Beware – facts and figures can be used selectively, by omitting evidence to the contrary.*

### Exaggeration, overstatement and hyperbole

Exaggerates the true situation for dramatic impact.

- *The reigning soccer champions were completely destroyed in last night’s epic battle.*
- *Attracts the reader’s attention through a surprising or extreme claim, especially in headlines.*
- *Often combined with an emotional appeal.*
- *Can generate humour to make the reader view the writer’s viewpoint positively.*

### Generalisation

A sweeping statement that suggests what is true for some is true for most or all.

- *’Generation Y are spoilt, fickle and lazy.’
- *Appeals to a widely held belief or prejudice.*
- *Can be combined with an emotional appeal since the use of reason will reveal the flaws in the generalisation.*

### Inclusive language

Uses ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’, etc. to include the readers in the same group as the writer.

- *’Aussie names are now the world’s biggest. But though we’re gaining space, we’re losing identity, and the sense that there should be limits to our consumption.’* (The sense of belonging to the same group positions the reader to share the same ideas as others within that group.)* |
- *Invokes our desire to be ‘left out’ or regarded as an outsider.*
- *Creates a striking image, often working on an emotional level.*
- *Often witty, more engaging than dry description.*

### Metaphor and simile

Figures of speech that identify a similarity between two different things. A simile uses ‘as if’ or ‘like’; a metaphor does not.

- *Pun* A play on a word that suggests a double meaning (e.g. ‘Bonkies’ meaning the football team or aircraft in WMI). Often plays on a word with a similar sound but different spelling (e.g. wheel/wet). |
- *Koala call un-bearable for animal rights activists* |

### Reason and logic

Used to link ideas together and develop an argument in support of the main contention.

- *If we don’t have the resources to support an increased population, we can’t sustain this level of immigration. It’s that simple.* |
- *Suggest that the writer’s viewpoint is true and not just their opinion or emotional response. |
- *Make the argument ‘watertight’ so opposing viewpoints seem less convincing. |
- *Often used with a detailed tone and/or formal style.*

### Repetition

Using a word or phrase several times.

- *’Women’s mags are self-hate manuals, full of diets you’ll never be able to stick to, lies you’ll never be able to read, recipes for food that’ll never look as good on the table as it does in the pictures.’* (Catherine Devney, *The Age*, 27 March 2009) |
- *Emphasises the main point or key term. |
- *Often used in speeches to reinforce or highlight a point.*

### Rhetorical question

A question with an implied but unstated answer.

- *Do members really want a ‘lying, incompetent businesswoman as the club president?’* |
- *Forces the reader to supply the answer and see things from the writer’s perspective.*
- *Impels the answer: self-evident and therefore correct.*
- *Often contains an emotional appeal.*