


Persuasive technique and definition	Example	How the technique persuades
<p>Alliteration Repetition of a consonant, especially at the start of words.</p>	<p>'Rapid rise in rail station robberies' (Headline)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gains attention; adds emphasis; often in headlines. • Draws attention to key words. • Not persuasive on its own but can be when used with other techniques such as puns.
<p>Sample analysis: The use of alliteration in the headline gives it an urgent, insistent tone, underscoring the seriousness of the increase in crime at train stations.</p>		
<p>Anecdote Short account or story – often entertaining; gives a human angle that engages the reader; can convey information.</p>	<p>'Recently my neighbour experienced these problems first-hand.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions readers to respond emotionally, e.g. with fear or pleasure. • 'Rings true' so positions readers to take notice and accept information.
<p>Sample analysis: The anecdote adds interest to the article and assures us that the writer has personally known the subject. This helps to establish them as a credible source of information. These factors all encourage the reader to accept the writer's view of their subject.</p>		
<p>Appeal to authority Uses the opinion of an expert or authority figure to impress audience or prove a point.</p>	<p>'Professor Tran's extensive research in this area leaves little doubt that ...'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassures the reader that the writer's viewpoint is shared by someone with expert knowledge. • Influences the reader to respond positively and agree.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer's viewpoint is endorsed by Professor Tran, who clearly has status and expertise in this field. This positions the reader to give the viewpoint serious consideration, since specialised knowledge reassures the reader that the information supporting this view is reliable and can stand up to scrutiny.</p>		
<p>Appeal to common sense Common sense is practical everyday knowledge that is accepted as obvious and therefore 'true'.</p>	<p>'It's not rocket science. Increased fines for speeding equals a reduction in the road toll - it's pure common sense.' (comment on an online forum for car enthusiasts, 29 June 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressures the reader to agree by implying that anyone who disagrees lacks practical intelligence and cannot see what is self-evident.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer uses an explicit appeal to common sense to influence the reader to agree that increased speeding fines will lower the road toll. The colloquial phrase 'it's not rocket science' reinforces the impression that most people would accept the writer's assertion as true.</p>		
<p>Appeal to family values Suggests that traditional family life provides the essential values for a healthy, stable society. Usually takes the nuclear family for granted.</p>	<p>'The government needs to make the well-being of families a top priority to ensure parents have the time and resources to care for children so that they grow up feeling secure and loved.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads the reader to view traditional nuclear families as the most desirable kinds of families. • Can position the reader to blame destructive or antisocial behaviour on separated or single-parent families.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer positions the reader to believe that government support for people to spend more time with families will ensure that children will be 'loved and secure'. However, being with children will not in itself ensure they are 'loved and secure'. The word 'ensure' positions the reader to think that the desired goal will definitely be achieved, while the last two words play on the reader's concern for children's safety and emotional welfare.</p>		
<p>Appeal to fear and insecurity Suggests that people's safety, security or freedom are at risk; often exaggerates a situation to present a 'worst-case scenario'.</p>	<p>'The terrorists are amongst us now – we must be vigilant.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressures the reader to feel that solutions are needed urgently so they should agree with the proposals. • Also persuades the reader to believe that the writer has their best interests at heart by wanting to protect them.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer appeals to fear of a terrorist attack in order to make the reader more watchful and alert to the possibility of danger. The close presence of terrorists arouses fear and a sense of vulnerability and positions the reader to agree that vigilance is indeed necessary.</p>		

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<p>Appeal to the hip-pocket nerve Threatens our financial wellbeing because we fear or believe that we are being overcharged or 'ripped off'.</p>	<p>'Who funds the ABC? That's right, we do. If the show's creators can think of no better use for OUR money than to spend it on puerile nonsense, then it's time to give it the chop.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incites strong emotions, e.g. anger at being overcharged or because money is being misused. Positions the reader to reject the views of those who want to raise prices, fees, etc.
<p>Sample analysis: The speaker appeals to the hip-pocket nerve to make us feel that public money, which the writer identifies as 'OUR money', is being wasted on something entirely unworthy. The reader is likely to feel outraged and protective of these funds, thus positioning them to think that the program should be axed.</p>		
<p>Appeal to tradition and customs Appeals to a sense of security based on the belief that rituals and traditions are valuable and should be preserved.</p>	<p>'We wish to protest the proposed unnecessary changes to the Hillcrest Grammar school uniform. The school has been known for its distinctive navy and gold uniform for almost a century. The uniform is flattering, classic and traditional, and provides a link to the generations of past students who have worn it with pride. It must not be changed on a whim.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages the reader to resist change, and to feel that links with the past should be retained. Can position readers to view 'modern' lifestyles as inferior and damaging the social fabric.
<p>Sample analysis: The writers emphasise the link to the past they feel the school's uniform embodies, suggesting that to change it would be to damage a powerful symbol of school community. The reader is positioned to feel that the proposed changes are based on a frivolous 'whim' which cannot compare in importance to the weight of tradition.</p>		
<p>Appeal to loyalty and patriotism Assumes a commitment to our group, a love of our country, that old ways of doing things should be highly valued.</p>	<p>'Don't let your community down – you owe it a helping hand so it can help you in the future.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positions the reader to agree with (and possibly take part in) actions that will benefit the nation or the group. Can arouse feelings of anger or fear that position people to take action to support a cause or a group.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer appeals to the reader's sense of loyalty in order to provoke them into doing something positive for their community. The reader is positioned to feel a sense of obligation to support the community, which in turn will generate a desire to take action.</p>		
<p>Appeal to sense of justice Plays on our belief that we all have the right to be treated fairly and we should strive for just outcomes.</p>	<p>'The death penalty is the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment, and a violation of fundamental human rights.' (Amnesty International)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positions the reader to agree that 'the punishment should fit the crime'. Arouses feelings of anger when somebody is punished too harshly or a criminal 'gets off' lightly.
<p>Sample analysis: Amnesty appeals to a sense of justice in order to condemn the death penalty. It clearly states that this punishment is inappropriate, regardless of the crime, and because it is inhuman, it is fundamentally unjust. The use of emotive words such as 'inhuman' and 'violation' also position the reader to reject the death penalty.</p>		
<p>Attacks and praise Attacks belittle or denigrate an individual or group. Praise presents a person or group as outstanding, attractive, etc.</p>	<p>'I've had it with the selfish idiots who park in disabled parking spaces without permits. The fact that they're "only parked there for a minute" is a pathetic excuse and no help at all for the many people with disabilities I care for who regularly miss out because of people like you.' Disgusted, online comment on a community website, 14 May 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attack: positions us to think badly of the person or group and therefore to dismiss their ideas or viewpoint. Praise: makes us admire or like the person/group and therefore agree with their ideas.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer attacks people who illegitimately park in disabled parking spots, describing them in derisive terms as 'selfish' and 'pathetic'. Such strong language attempts to position the reader to feel equally antagonistic towards these people. The writer's identification of themselves as a carer for people with disabilities is used to help justify their indignation and encourage the reader to feel that they speak from experience.</p>		

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<p>Clichés Overused phrases that a wide range of readers can quickly grasp and understand.</p>	<p>'When legislation is needed to ensure that our leaders behave honestly and honourably, we have surely reached rock bottom.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reassure the reader through a familiar expression that can position the reader to accept an idea because they are lulled into an uncritical mindset. ● Often have a comic effect. This can produce a light-hearted, amusing tone, or a sarcastic, critical tone.
<p>Sample analysis: The term 'rock bottom' is a cliché referring to the very lowest point. Here it provides a shorthand way of positioning the reader to agree with the writer's poor opinion of politicians. 'Rock bottom' makes the situation sound dire, encouraging the reader to feel that politicians are inherently dishonest.</p>		
<p>Colourful language Creates a strong image through unusual and striking words, especially adjectives.</p>	<p>'Music-streaming service Spotify is ripping off artists, and a growing number of them are rightly giving the organisation the flick.' Blog entry, <i>lifeinfourchords</i>, 27 June 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creates a memorable image and catches the reader's interest. ● Positions the reader to take a strongly positive or negative view of the subject.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer's use of colourful expressions such as 'ripping off' and 'giving the organisation the flick' contributes to the extract's blunt tone and creates the impression that the writer is speaking truthfully. The language makes the writer's point more memorable and forcefully conveys the writer's indignation to the reader.</p>		
<p>Connotations and loaded words Connotations are meanings associated with or implied by words, as opposed to their literal or 'dictionary' meanings.</p>	<p>'Aussie dollar plummets' The Australian dollar slumped to a new low last night due to increasing nervousness about Europe's economic woes.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Associated meanings of words arouse feelings and attitudes that position the reader to like/dislike, accept/reject an idea, person, proposal, and so on.
<p>Sample analysis: The word 'plummet' suggests a rapid and uncontrolled fall, while the word 'slumped' carries associations with depression, positioning the reader to respond with dismay to the news of the dollar's decline.</p>		
<p>Emotive language Deliberate use of strong words and phrases to arouse the reader's feelings and so manipulate them to agree.</p>	<p>'Northern suburbs a hotbed of terror' MELBOURNE'S northern suburbs were regarded as a hot spot for potential home-grown terrorists, a Labor MP revealed yesterday.' (John Masanauskas, <i>Herald Sun</i>, 16 May 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The reader is positioned to react very emotionally and to agree with the writer's viewpoint before reason comes into play.
<p>Sample analysis: The emotive phrase 'hotbed of terror' evokes fear and alarm in the reader. Other emotive terms such as 'hot spot' and 'home-grown terrorists' reinforce the impression that Melbourne's northern suburbs are extremely dangerous.</p>		
<p>Evidence (including statistics, graphs and diagrams) The use of facts and figures to provide rational, scientific 'proof' as the basis for a substantiated point of view.</p>	<p>'As demand for the triple-0 line surged last year, frazzled emergency communications staff were tied up answering a staggering 25,000 nuisance and hoax calls - that's three every hour. Police figures obtained by <i>The Sunday Mail</i> showed in the past 12 months only 6 per cent of the 474,402 calls made to the Queensland Police Communication centres required lights and sirens under Code 1 or 2 for urgent responses.' (<i>The Sunday Mail</i>, 15 January 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positions the reader to view the writer's argument as more convincing because it appears to be objective and reliable. ● Beware – facts and figures can be used selectively, by omitting evidence to the contrary.
<p>Sample analysis: The inclusion of a series of figures makes the article appear well researched and based on solid evidence. When this evidence is coupled with emotive terms such as 'frazzled' and 'staggering', the reader is positioned to feel that this is a serious problem which needs to be fixed.</p>		

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<p>Exaggeration, overstatement and hyperbole</p> <p>Presents an extreme view of a situation for dramatic impact and to provoke strong emotional responses.</p> <p>Hyperbole is an extravagant statement not meant to be taken literally.</p>	<p>'Russian scientists promise to make you immortal'</p> <p>The scientists aim to create a human-like android, capable of housing a human brain, which would direct the body to carry out human functions as normal.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exaggeration positions a reader to respond emotionally and so be more likely to accept or reject a viewpoint. Can generate humour to make the reader view the writer's viewpoint positively.
<p>Sample analysis: The headline's claim that scientists are promising immortality is likely to grab the reader's attention by evoking both incredulity and hope. The direct address ('you') suggests that the promise is being made personally to the reader. Although the opening paragraph explains that the idea is still theoretical, the headline uses exaggeration to create a powerful emotional impact.</p>		
<p>Generalisation</p> <p>A sweeping statement that suggests what is true for some is true for most or all.</p>	<p>'Social media users are ill-mannered and ignorant, incapable of expressing themselves without resorting to four-letter words and mindless insults. Listening to their uninformed opinions is a complete waste of time.'</p> <p>(Letter to the editor, Eric Hearne, <i>Weekly Times</i>, 17 August 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerful because appeals to commonly held beliefs, prejudices and views. Positions the reader to regard and judge others in a narrow, stereotyped way.
<p>Sample analysis: Characterising all users of social media as rude and uninformed conveys a highly negative impression of them, positioning the reader to agree that their opinions may not be worthwhile if they are expressed so poorly.</p>		
<p>Graphs and diagrams</p> <p>Facts and figures presented in a visual form.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give a quickly understood picture of the 'facts' that support a viewpoint in an article or similar – help to persuade and position the reader to agree.
<p>Sample analysis: The graph presents a clear picture of people's preference for brand X over brand Y, seeming to leave no room for doubt. However, it is possible that yet another brand might actually have the dominant market share; and the number of people asked for their view is not referred to. Thus, the graph's visual representation of people's viewpoints appears clear-cut but could in fact be entirely misleading.</p>		
<p>Inclusive language</p> <p>Uses 'we', 'our', 'us', etc. to include the readers in the same group as the writer. Assumes that everyone in the group shares the writer's viewpoint.</p>	<p>'Finally the research to back up what we all know – that the cost of parking in this city is painful. Not only a strain on the hip pocket, the study by Local University shows that our sky-high parking fees are also causing us extreme social and emotional stress.'</p> <p>(Kim Tran, online comment, <i>yournewsweek</i>, 19 July 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reader is positioned to agree with the writer because it appeals to their desire to belong to the group or plays on their fears of being 'left out' or regarded as an outsider.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer's use of inclusive language in the references to 'what we all know' and 'our sky-high parking fees' invites the reader to share her outrage at the city's parking fees. She combines this use of inclusive language with evidence in the form of research findings in an effort to persuade the reader that all the city's inhabitants are suffering.</p>		
<p>Irony</p> <p>A feature of language that allows the writer to say one thing when their real meaning is the opposite.</p>	<p>'We're running out of water and the government wants another swimming centre – that's just what we need.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reader is positioned to share in the writer's ridicule (and rejection) of an idea or object. The writer can also influence the reader to agree through a sarcastic and/or humorous tone that is clever and engaging.
<p>Sample analysis: The sarcastic and indignant tone indicates that we certainly don't need another swimming centre in a time of water shortages. This positions the reader to see the government as impractical and ridiculous and so to reject their proposal as preposterous.</p>		

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<p>Metaphor and simile</p> <p>Compare two different things, suggesting a similarity between them. A simile uses 'as if' or 'like'; a metaphor does not.</p>	<p>'It was a real-life horror movie as the Tigers massacred the Hawks at the weekend.'</p> <p>(Cat Gregoriou, <i>sportsonline</i>, 8 July 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a striking and memorable image, often with emotional impact that can influence the reader's viewpoint. • Because more witty and engaging than dry description, can position the reader to support the writer's viewpoint.
<p>Sample analysis: The comparison of a football match with a horror movie, together with use of the emotive word 'massacred', conveys to the reader the scale of the defeat, encouraging them to feel both sympathy for the Hawks and admiration for the ruthlessness of the Tigers. The comparison also communicates the writer's passion to the reader, encouraging them to feel as invested in the game as she does.</p>		
<p>Pun</p> <p>A play on a word that suggests a double meaning (e.g. 'Bombers' meaning the football team or aircraft in WWII). Often plays on a word with a similar sound but different spelling (e.g. whet/wet).</p>	<p>'Smoking parents an ill wind for kids'</p> <p>(<i>Herald Sun</i> headline, 23 May 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grabs the reader's interest and attention, especially through the use of humour. • The 'double' meaning of a word usually has a positive or negative connotation – this helps to influence the reader's response to the issue.
<p>Sample analysis: The phrase 'ill wind' refers to bad news or an unfortunate event. Here it creates a play on words by being associated with smoking. The effect is to reinforce the idea that parents who smoke cigarettes contribute to their children's ill health.</p>		
<p>Reason and logic</p> <p>Used to link ideas and develop an argument supporting the writer's point of view. Can take into account the opposing viewpoint in order to show why the writer's argument is superior.</p>	<p>'It is to be hoped that this new fad of barefoot running is short-lived. It stands to reason that running without cushioning and support for the feet will cause increased pressure and intensified impact, resulting in a whole raft of stress-related injuries.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position the reader to accept the writer's viewpoint as objectively true because it is not just personal opinion or emotional reaction. • Persuade the reader through a well-argued case that can stand up to scrutiny. • Often used with a calm tone and/or formal style.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer uses reason and logic to express the view that barefoot running is an unsafe 'fad'. The logic of 'if x, then y' and the list of consequences given for running without shoes leads the reader to feel that the writer's viewpoint is considered and reasonable. This is underscored by the authoritative and assertive tone.</p>		
<p>Repetition</p> <p>Using the same word or phrase and idea several times adds emphasis.</p>	<p>'This is the kind of vision that the Greens bring ... It is an affordable vision and it is a responsible vision.'</p> <p>(www.greens.org.au)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases the impact of a main point or key term and so engages the reader's attention. • Can produce a more urgent or insistent tone, encouraging the reader to agree.
<p>Sample analysis: The repetition of 'vision' reinforces a central idea promoted by the Greens – that they have a vision for the future rather than being focused on short-term gain. It also allows different aspects of this vision to be highlighted, suggesting the Greens are not just a single-issue party. This encourages us to regard the party favourably and as worthy of our vote.</p>		
<p>Rhetorical question</p> <p>A question with an implied but unstated answer – used purely for effect.</p>	<p>'How would you like to live it up in a million-dollar Brighton East townhouse with all the bells and whistles, a flash fully furnished St Kilda apartment offering sweeping views of the esplanade and water, or a brand new Hampton penthouse boasting a private rooftop terrace - all without paying anything for the privilege?'</p> <p>(Chris Vedelago, <i>The Age</i>, 20 May 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests that the 'answer' is self-evident and therefore the reader must agree with it. • Directly addresses the reader as a way of engaging their agreement.
<p>Sample analysis: The writer draws the reader's attention to the behaviour of a conman who lived in luxury houses without paying the rent. By beginning the article with this rhetorical question, the writer aims to intrigue the reader and then arouse their resentment. In this way, the reader is positioned to condemn the scam and agree with the writer's contention that the police ought to have done more to apprehend the culprit.</p>		

