

# Basic Rhetorical Strategies

*For the purposes of writing, when we refer to rhetoric, we often talk about it as the art of persuasion. There are many different strategies a communicator may employ to get his message across. Below is a list of some of the more basic ones:*

Exemplification: Provide examples or cases in point. Are there examples -- facts, statistics, cases in point, personal experiences, interview quotations -- added to the essay?

Description: Detail sensory perceptions of a person, place, or thing. Does a person, place, or object play a prominent role in the essay?

Narration: Recount an event. Are there any anecdotes, experiences, or stories in the essay? Process analysis: Explain how to do something or how something happens. Does any portion of the essay include concrete directions about a certain process?

Comparison and contrast: Discuss similarities and differences. Does the essay contain two or more related subjects? Does it evaluate or analyze two or more people, places, processes, events, or things? Are there any similarities and/or differences between two or more elements?

Division and classification: Divide a whole into parts or sort related items into categories. Does the essay reduce the subject to more manageable parts or group parts?

Definition: Provide the meaning of terms you use. Is there any important word in the essay with many meanings and is defined or clarified?

Cause and effect analysis: Analyze why something happens and describe the consequences of a string of events. Does the essay examine past events or their outcome? Does it explain why something happened?

Argumentation: Convince through reasoning. See more on inductive and deductive reasoning below.

Aristotelian appeals: Appeals to passion (pathos), ethics (ethos), or logic (logos). See more on appeals below.

Repetition: The constant use of certain words. Why, with all words at her disposal, does the writer choose to repeat particular words?

Counterpoints: Contrasting ideas such as black/white, darkness/light, good/bad. Does the writer acknowledge and respond to counterpoints to her position?

Imagery: Language that evokes one or all of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. Does the essay use any provocative language that calls upon readers' senses?

Metaphor and simile: A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by "like" or "as." Does the essay make connections between things to make a point or elicit an idea?

Style, tone, and voice: The attitude a writer takes towards a subject or character: serious, humorous, sarcastic, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, solemn, objective. What tone does the essay have? How does the writer portray herself? What choices does she make that influence her position?

Analogy: The comparison of two pairs that have the same relationship. Are there any comparisons made by the writer to strengthen her message?

Flashback: Action that interrupts to show an event that happened at an earlier time which is necessary to better understand current information. Is the essay out of chronological order?

Hyperbole: Exaggeration or overstatement. Does the writer make any claims that seem extreme?

Personification: Giving human qualities to animals or objects. Is something without conscience thinking or talking?

"Allusion": A reference to something real or fictional, to someone, some event, or something in the Bible, history, literature, or any phase of culture.

Irony: An expression or utterance marked by deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning, often humorous. Does the writer really support her own assertions? Does she seem to be claiming the opposite you expect her to claim?

Oxymoron: A contradiction in terms such as "faithless devotion," "searing cold," "deafening silence," "virtual reality," "act naturally," "peacekeeper missile," or "larger half." Do any of the writer's terms seem to obviously clash?

Paradox: Reveals a kind of truth which at first seems contradictory; Red wine is both good and bad for us. Do any contradictions used in the essay contain some grain of truth?

Symbolism: Using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning; A skull and crossbones symbolize death. Does the writer seem to assert that a thing has meaning outside of the obvious?

Parody: A humorous exaggerated imitation, or travesty. If there is humor, does it seem to be mocking or making fun of a particular person, place, thing, or action?

Sarcasm: A cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound. Are there any caustic ironies in the essay?

Satire: Literary tone used to ridicule or make fun of human vice or weakness, often with the intent of correcting, or changing, the subject of the satiric attack. Does the writer's humor aim to fix its target?

Diction: Choice of words. Why, with all words at her disposal, does the writer choose to use those particular words?

Parallelism: The use of identical or equivalent constructions in corresponding clauses. Are there any syntactic similarities between two parts of a sentence?

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