

## The Three Appeals of Argument

Aristotle postulated three argumentative appeals: logical, ethical, and emotional. Strong arguments have a balance of all of three, though logical (logos) is essential for a strong, valid argument. Appeals, however, can also be misused, creating arguments that are not credible.

### Logical Appeal (*logos*)

Logical appeal is the strategic use of logic, claims, and evidence to convince an audience of a certain point.

*When used correctly, logical appeal contains the following elements...*

- Strong, clear claims
- Reasonable qualifiers for claims
- Warrants that are valid
- Clear reasons for claims
- Strong evidence (facts, statistics, personal experience, expert authority, interviews, observations, anecdotes)
- Acknowledgement of the opposition

*When used poorly, logical appeals may include...*

- Over-generalized claims
- Reasons that are not fully explained or supported
- Logical fallacies
- Evidence misused or ignored
- No recognition of opposing views

### Ethical Appeal (*ethos*)

Ethical appeal is used to establish the writer as fair, open-minded, honest, and knowledgeable about the subject matter. The writer creates a sense of him or herself as trustworthy and credible.

*When used correctly, the writer is seen as...*

- Well-informed about the topic
- Confident in his or her position
- Sincere and honest
- Understanding of the reader's concerns and possible objections
- Humane and considerate

*When used incorrectly, the writer can be viewed as...*

- Unfair or dishonest
- Distorting or misrepresenting information (biased)
- Insulting or dismissive of other viewpoints
- Advocating intolerant ideas

## **Emotional Appeal (*pathos*)**

Not surprisingly, emotional appeals target the emotions of the reader to create some kind of connection with the writer. Since humans are in many ways emotional creatures, pathos can be a very powerful strategy in argument. For this same reason, however, emotional appeal is often misused...sometimes to intentionally mislead readers or to hide an argument that is weak in logical appeal. A lot of **visual appeal** is emotional in nature (think of advertisements, with their powerful imagery, colors, fonts, and symbols).

*When done well, emotional appeals...*

- Reinforce logical arguments
- Use diction and imagery to create a bond with the reader in a human way
- Appeal to idealism, beauty, humor, nostalgia, or pity (or other emotions) in a balanced way
- Are presented in a fair manner

*When used improperly, emotional appeals...*

- Become a substitute for logic and reason (TV and magazine advertising often relies heavily on emotional rather than logical appeal)
- Uses stereotypes to pit one group of people against another (propaganda and some political advertising does this)
- Offers a simple, unthinking reaction to a complex problem
- Takes advantage of emotions to manipulate (through fear, hate, pity, prejudice, embarrassment, lust, or other feelings) rather than convince credibly

## **Effectiveness vs. Credibility**

**Credible (*credibility*)** means an argument is logically sound and well-supported with strong evidence and reasoning.

**Effective (*effectiveness*)** means an argument works in convincing or persuading its audience. Many arguments that are effective are also credible. . . but there are also many that aren't.

