

Persuasion toolkit

Persuasion texts present a single point of view designed to encourage, persuade, cajole, sell, warn etc. Informal, direct, idiomatic and figurative language, with opinions dressed up as facts are common elements in persuasive writing, where grabbing attention and securing commitment from the reader is of greater priority than with other text-types. A particular benefit of working on this text-type is that it raises critical awareness of how language can be used to manipulate our thoughts, feelings and actions. Persuasion is common currency in advertising, publicity, invitations, complaints, journalistic commentary, political debate and estate agency. It is relatively easy to create examples and contexts for this work in the classroom and to link it to subjects across the curriculum. The structure of persuasive writing is relatively straightforward but its content is often rich in figurative language which is where much of the teaching needs to be directed. Persuasive writing is also a useful preparation for writing discussion texts which are designed to balance two sides of an argument and are generally more objective and rational. Like other text types, persuasive writing is not a discrete category. Depending on purpose and audience, persuasion is likely to include elements of: recount and anecdote to relate it to the reader's experience or give examples, information and explanatory writing to inform and justify, and directions or instructions to give it some imperative force. Persuasion is not likely to contain a balanced discussion of pros and cons!

Year 1 and 2: as in N/R +

Learn and retell simple persuasive texts linked to children's experience with a three-part structure in sentences or short paraphrased points to promote e.g.
 - School events or products e.g. concerts, sports days, fetes, biscuits baked in school etc.
 - Favourite stories, TV programmes, food, games etc.
 - Special clothes, toys, places to visit etc.

The structure should comprise:
 - A catchy title naming the product or event e.g. The Red Class Crispy Biscuit
 - An opening sentence or two inviting readers to e.g. Try the Red Class Crispy biscuit.
 - A series of positive points to recommend the event or product e.g. You will really like our biscuits because: They are really crispy and delicious, they are perfect for a quick snack, they don't leave any crumbs, they contain nuts which are good for you, they are very cheap at 5p each, all the money we collect is for helping sick animals
 - A conclusion drawn from the points e.g. you are sure to enjoy these great biscuits, so come to our class and buy some today.

Focus on a few essential conjunctions to join ideas and structure the argument:
 - Numerical firstly, secondly, to list points
 - Conjunctions; and, but, because, as, when to add information and extend ideas
 - If, then, to persuade e.g. if you enjoy biscuits, you will really enjoy

Use a version of this as a framework for discussion and shared writing on new topics, substituting new persuasive points. Keep ideas simple and straightforward to focus on remembering and allaying the structure.

Magpie and save adjectives which enhance persuasive impact; delicious, crispy, fascinating, gripping, unmissable etc.

Use simple comparatives and superlatives: best, fastest, lighter, tastier etc.

Use complete simple or compound sentences with correct punctuation.

Use the present tense and usually 2nd person (you) to talk directly to the reader.

Year 3 and 4: as in Year 1/2 +

Consolidate and extend the text structure introduced in Year 1 and 2 with:
 - A title to hook the reader and capture the topic clearly e.g. The Mary Rose – an unmissable experience
 - An introduction which:
 (a) Invites the reader directly e.g. Have you ever wondered? If you enjoy...don't miss, what could be easier than to?
 (b) Uses a punchy topic sentence to make clear what is being promoted e.g. The New Mary Rose exhibition could be just the place to visit this weekend
 - A main section setting out the points in favour in a connected sequence:
 (a) As a list with numbers, numerical conjunctions or bullets
 (b) As a connected paragraph, or series of paragraphs. Introduce points with a topic sentence e.g. The sky tower gives you, or an invitation e.g. See things differently from the top of the sky tower. Add information to tempt and entice e.g. In the old mill, where they still grind flour
 - A conclusion to round off e.g. At the end of your visit why not enjoy, you can have all this and more for the price of, Book now. Tickets are available from.

Invest time in shared reading a variety of persuasive texts – adverts and publicity – to understand how they are organised. This had the added benefit of improving comprehension and critical reading at a key point in children's reading development. Use this to magpie a bank of persuasive devices:
 - Use of informal language e.g. Join us for great day out
 - Imperative, direct forms of address e.g. Don't forget to ride on the train
 - Repetition e.g. Find us, find the fun
 - Boasting and exaggeration e.g. The highest tower in the south of England, the UK's first, breath-taking, stunning, hair-raising
 - Short sentences e.g. Don't wait, try it now
 - Patterns of three e.g. Make your own T-shirt in 15 minutes: design it, print it, wear it

Use complex sentences to combine and compress information, create emphasis and make the text more interesting for the reader:
 - Relative clauses e.g. This walkway, which has the one of the longest
 - Subordinate clauses e.g. On the train ride, as you cross the bridge, a red signal will

Use a wider range of conjunctions and phrases to:
 - Address and invite readers e.g. see the new, have you ever been etc.
 - Add information e.g. as well as, additionally etc.
 - Mark time and sequence e.g. when, after, as soon as etc.

Year 5 and 6: as in Year 3/4 +

The framework for persuasive writing introduced in Y3/4 should be extended in Y5/6, with increasing emphasis on applying persuasive writing across the curriculum with more emphasis on reasoned persuasion to complement discussion writing at this stage. Opportunities can be exploited in most subjects e.g. through writing advertisements, letters, short articles etc., which plead, complain, support, object, persuade on issues arising from: -
 -History e.g. Plead for better the treatment of children; Make a case for proper sewerage in cities; Write in support of the abolition of slavery; argue for importance of free education for all children, write a publicity brochure for the Great Exhibition etc.
 - Geography e.g. Convince authorities that we need to keep our rivers clean, Argue that cars should be banned in towns etc.
 - Science e.g. Argue that smoking should be made illegal; Complain about loss of hedgerow habitats for wild birds.
 - PHSE and current affairs e.g. Object to a new runway at Heathrow, Persuade other children not to eat junk food etc.

When assembling arguments:
 -try to support views with reasons or evidence e.g. ...According to the Daily Mail, more than 10,000 homes could face demolition if a proposed third runway is built at Heathrow.
 - offer and refute some counter arguments e.g. Now some people might object that...,
 - disguise opinions to sound like facts e.g. In fact..., The truth is..., in what some would call the most important moment in..., It has frequently been claimed that...
 - or (more rationally) make clear that these are your opinions e.g. I think., in my opinion...,
 - try to persuade using persuasive devices (see below),
 - try to get the reader interested and on your side - appear reasonable.
 - Make your reader think that the rest of the world, agrees with you e.g. Everyone agrees that..., We all know that...
 - Use humour as it can get people on your side.

Express possibility, speculation and conditionality, using modal verbs may, might, should, could, would etc. and adverbs perhaps, surely, possibly; phrases like provided that..., so long as... etc. Modal verbs allow us to suppose, imagine, predict warn, suggest, prohibit, oblige etc.

- Change of direction e.g. but, however, although etc.

Use correct punctuation for sentences, clauses, questions, lists and exclamations.

Draw on persuasive devices from Y3/4 plus others e.g.:

- extreme adjectives and superlatives e.g. ghastly, appalling, fantastic, the coolest, hideous, fabulous...
- Exaggeration e.g. ...the biggest single change to our town for fifty years..., ...vast numbers of people..., the last place on earth..., great opportunity...
- emotive language e.g. No-one would believe that the..., Just imagine the effect that..., ... sprawling across the field...
- language that claims authority disguising opinions to sound like facts e.g. In fact..., It is said that..., there can be no doubt that...
- Rhetorical questions e.g. Should we all be expected to...? Who would believe that...?
- alliteration e.g. ... mean-minded men..., silly and short-sighted..., cheap and cheerful..., funky, friendly and fantastic..., Buy British...
- persuasive language e.g. Surely..., It wouldn't be difficult to..., is bound to be..., there can be little doubt...
- Persuasive definitions e.g. No-one but an idiot would..., Every right-thinking person would...
- Pandering and condescension: Naturally it will take time for people to realise..., the ordinary man in the street...
- similes and metaphors e.g. ... like a desert at night..., like shopping in a factory; ...the whole idea is a joke!.... ...the hedgerow is a treasure trove for birds, ...and more cars would be a nightmare..., but parking bikes in narrow spaces is a piece of cake.
- Sarcasm, used sparingly, e.g. the government is likely to support that..., (implying the opposite).

Vary sentence structure, length and type e.g.

- complex sentences to combine and compress information: Although a decision is yet to be taken, there is already evidence showing that a new runway could damage the health of local residents, and might could even prove fatal for babies...
- Short sentences for effect e.g. No-one wants this.
- Sentence openers: interestingly..., from our point of view..., Indeed there could even be...,
- Passive voice to sound more formal: It could be said that..., Additional disturbance would be created by...
- Conditional and hypothetical (if...then) sentences using the subjunctive 'were' If that's the best they can offer..., If it were to be approved...,

When you have finished, re-read and check to see if you are persuaded.