



Writing Persuasively About Climate Change

This activity introduces your students to the concept of civic engagement and direct action through writing, while teaching them about effective persuasive writing techniques and the foundations of solid arguments.

According to a 2021 NextGen Climate Survey, more than 80% of Gen Z youth are concerned about the health of the planet. By providing them with tools to take direct action, teachers can provide their students with a sense of agency and optimism, and equip them with skills they'll need to engage meaningfully (and eloquently!) in public life.

Preparation

Get students thinking about persuasive writing before they receive the hand-out. One way to do this is to write the words 'What makes an argument persuasive?' on the board. Before distributing the activity sheet, students can either 'Think, Pair, Share' with their neighbours or add their own thoughts to the board or their notebooks.

Next, introduce the activity's learning objective: 'Understand and apply techniques to persuade a reader.' Once students have received the hand-out, we recommend taking a moment to discuss the importance of civic engagement and how it can help to shape a country's politics.

Instructions

Students will begin the activity by examining a persuasive text and being introduced to the basics of persuasive writing. They can then apply what they've learned in their own writing. Their task is to write a letter to their country's government, persuading them to take action to address climate change.

Students follow the prompts to brainstorm ideas for their letters. We recommend encouraging students to experiment with the persuasive techniques that they have learned, and to conduct their own research to find credible evidence to support their arguments. Following this, your students can get started writing their letters.

We recommend reminding students to use a **formal and reasonable, yet passionate tone**, appropriate to their audience of government officials.

Finally, at the end of the activity, students who feel passionately about their topic can read their letter aloud to the class.





Task variations and extension activities:

- Require students to write three body paragraphs instead of two, including another persuasive reason to back their arguments.
- Students can swap their letters for peer-to-peer marking against the checklist before editing and polishing their final drafts.
- Students can present their letters as speeches to the class.
- Allow students to choose their own climate or sustainability-related topic. For example, calling on their governments to: ban single-use plastics; transition to renewable energy sources; ban bottom-trawling; subsidize sustainable agricultural practices. (Tip: students can investigate climate solutions listed on the [Project Drawdown website](#).)

We welcome feedback and would be delighted to hear your thoughts on this activity. We would also love to see what your students come up with so your class is more than welcome to send us a scan of their letters. Feel free to send an email to schools@climatescience.org and we'll be sure to get back to you soon :)

LOGOS

Logic/Reason/Proof

Main techniques

Structure of the speech (opening/body/conclusion)

References to studies, statistics, case studies

Comparisons, analogies, and metaphors

ETHOS

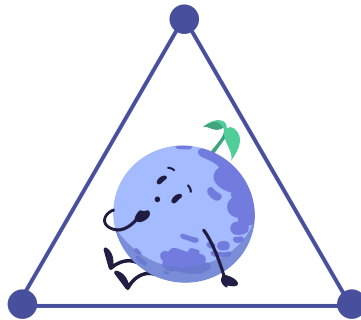
Credibility/Trust

Main techniques

Personal branding

Confidence in delivery

Cites credible sources



PATHOS

Emotions/Values

Main techniques

Stories

Inspirational quotes

Vivid language